10

Jamie H. Hale

Santa Barbara

May. 1911

H. S.

Josephine Preston Peabody

(Mrs. Lionel Marks)

THE PIPER. 12mo, $1.10 *net*. Postage extra.

THE BOOK OF THE LITTLE PAST. Illustrated in color. 8vo, $1.50.

THE SINGING LEAVES. 18mo, $1.00, *net*. Postpaid, $1.05.

MARLOWE: A DRAMA. 12mo, $1.10, *net*. Postpaid, $1.19.

FORTUNE AND MEN'S EYES. 12mo, $1.25.

OLD GREEK FOLK STORIES. In *Riverside Literature Series*. Paper, 15 cents, *net*; linen, 25 cents, *net*. Postpaid.

HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY

Boston and New York

THE PIPER

The Piper

A Play in Four Acts

By Josephine Preston Peabody

BOSTON and *NEW YORK*
Houghton Mifflin Company
The Riverside Press Cambridge
1911

COPYRIGHT, 1909, BY JOSEPHINE PEABODY MARKS

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

Published November 1909

NINTH IMPRESSION

TO

LIONEL S. MARKS

Anno 1284
Am Dage Johannis et Pauli
War der 26 Junii
Dorch einen Piper mit allerley Farve
bekledet
Gewesen CXXX Kinder verledet
Binnen Hamelen geboren
To Calvarie bi den Koppen verloren

[THE HAMELIN INSCRIPTION]

CHARACTERS

The Piper	*Strolling Players*
Michael-the-Sword-Eater	
Cheat-the-Devil	
Jacobus the Burgomeister	*Men of Hamelin*
Kurt the Syndic	
Peter the Cobbler	
Hans the Butcher	
Axel the Smith	
Martin the Watch	
Peter the Sacristan	
Anselm, a young priest	
Old Claus, a miser	
Town Crier	
Jan	*Children*
Hansel	
Ilse	
Trude	
Rudi	

Characters

Veronika, the wife of Kurt

Barbara, daughter of Jacobus

Wife of Hans the Butcher

Wife of Axel the Smith

Wife of Martin the Watch

Old Ursula

Burghers, nuns, priests, and children

Scene: Hamelin on the Weser, 1284 A. D.

SCENES

ACT I.		*The market-place in Hamelin*
ACT II.	SCENE I.	*Inside the 'Hollow-Hill'*
	SCENE II.	*The Cross-ways*
ACT III.		*The Cross-ways*
ACT IV.		*The market-place in Hamelin*

One week is supposed to elapse between Acts I and II.

Acts II and III occupy one day.

Act IV concerns the following morning.

Act I

The Piper

Act I

Scene: *The market-place of Hamelin. Right, the Minster, with an open shrine (right centre) containing a large sculptured figure of the Christ. Right, farther front, the house of* Kurt; *and other narrow house-fronts. Left, the Rathaus, and (down) the home of* Jacobus. *Front, to left and right, are corner-houses with projecting stories and casement windows. At the centre rear, a narrow street leads away between houses whose gables all but meet overhead.*

It is late summer afternoon, with a holiday crowd. In the open casements, front (right and left, opposite each other), sit Old Ursula *and* Old Claus, *looking on at men and things. — In the centre of the place now stands a*

rude wooden Ark with a tented top: and out of the openings (right and left) appear the artificial heads of animals, worn by the players inside. One is a Bear (inhabited by MICHAEL-THE-SWORD-EATER); *one is a large Reynard-the-Fox, later apparent as the* PIPER. *Close by is the mediæval piece of stage-property known as 'Hell-Mouth,' i. e. a red painted cave with a jaw-like opening, into which a mountebank dressed in scarlet* (CHEAT-THE-DEVIL) *is poking 'Lost Souls' with a pitchfork.*

BARBARA *loiters by the tent.* VERONIKA, *the sad young wife of* KURT, *watches from the house steps, left, keeping her little lame boy, Jan, close beside her.*

Shouts of delight greet the end of the show, — a Noah's Ark miracle-play of the rudest; and the Children continue to scream with joy whenever an Animal looks out of the Ark.

Men and women pay scant attention either to JACOBUS, *when he speaks (himself none too sober) — from his doorstep, prompted by the frowning* KURT, *— or yet to* ANSELM, *the priest, who stands forth with lifted hands, at the close of the miracle-play.*

ANSELM

AND you, who heed the colors of this show,
Look to your laughter! — It doth body forth
A Judgment that may take you unaware, —
Sun-struck with mirth, like unto chattering leaves
Some wind of wrath shall scourge to nothingness.

HANS, AXEL, AND OTHERS

Hurrah, Hurrah!

JACOBUS

And now, good townsmen all,
Seeing we stand delivered and secure
As once yon chosen creatures of the Ark,
For a similitude, — our famine gone,
Our plague of rats and mice, —

CROWD

Hurrah — hurrah!

JACOBUS

'T is meet we render thanks more soberly —

HANS *the Butcher*

Soberly, soberly, ay ! —

JACOBUS

For our deliverance.
And now, ye wit, it will be full three days
Since we beheld — our late departed pest. —

OLD URSULA

[*putting out an ear-trumpet*]

What does he say ?

REYNARD

[*from the Ark*]

— Oh, how felicitous !

HANS' WIFE

He 's only saying there be no more rats.

JACOBUS
[*with oratorical endeavor*]

Three days it is; and not one mouse, — one mouse,
One mouse, I say! — No-o-o! Quiet . . . as a mouse.
[*Resuming*]
And now . . .

CROWD

Long live Jacobus! —

JACOBUS

You have seen
Noah and the Ark, most aptly happening by
With these same play-folk. You have marked the Judgment.
You all have seen the lost souls sent to — Hell —
And, nothing more to do. —
[KURT *prompts him*]
Yes, yes. — And now . . .
[HANS *the Butcher steps out of his group.*]

HANS *the Butcher*

Hath no man seen the Piper? — Please your worships.

OTHERS

Ay, ay, so!
— Ay, where is he?
— Ho, the Piper!

JACOBUS

Piper, my good man?

HANS *the Butcher*

— He that charmed the rats!

OTHERS

Yes, yes, — that charmed the rats!

JACOBUS
[*piously*]

Why, no man knows. —
Which proves him such a random instrument
As Heaven doth sometimes send us, to our use;
Or, as I do conceive, no man at all, —
A man of air; or, I would say — delusion.
He 'll come no more.

REYNARD
[*from the Ark*]

Eh?—Oh, indeed, Meaow!

JACOBUS

'T is clearest providence. The rats are gone.
The man is gone. And there is nought to pay,
Save peaceful worship.

[*Pointing to the Minster.*]

REYNARD
[*sarcastically*]

Oh, indeed,— Meaow!

[*Sudden chorus of derisive animal noises from the Ark, delighting* PEOPLE *and* CHILDREN.

KURT

Silence,—you strollers there! Or I will have you
Gaoled, one and all.

PEOPLE

No, Kurt the Syndic, no!

BARBARA

[*to Jacobus*]

No, no! Ah, father, bid them stay awhile
And play it all again. — Or, if not all,
Do let us see that same good youth again,
Who swallowed swords — between the Ark Preserved
And the Last Judgment!

REYNARD

Michael-the-Sword-Eater,
Laurels for thee!

[*The* BEAR *disappears:* MICHAEL *puts out his own head, and gazes fixedly at* BARBARA.

CHILDREN

Oh, can't we see the animals in the Ark?
Again? Oh, can't we see it all again?

ILSE

Oh, leave out Noah! And let 's have only Bears
And Dromedaries, and the other ones! —

[*General confusion.*]

KURT

Silence!

JACOBUS

Good people — you have had your shows;
And it is meet, that having held due feast,
Both with our market and this Miracle,
We bring our holiday to close with prayer
And public thanks unto Saint Willibald, —
Upon whose day the rats departed thence.

REYNARD

[*loudly*]

Saint Willibald!

BEAR

— Saint Willibald!

OTHER ANIMALS

[*looking out*]

{Saint Willibald!
{Saint! Oh!

CROWD

Saint Willibald! — And what had he to do
With ridding us o' rats?

HANS *the Butcher*

'T was the Piping Man
Who came and stood here in the market-place,
And swore to do it for one thousand guilders!

PETER *the Cobbler*

Ay, and he did it, too! — Saint Willibald!
[*Renewed uproar round the tent.*]

KURT
[*to Jacobus*]

Drive out those mountebanks! 'T is ever so.
Admit them to the town and you must pay
Their single show with riotings a week. —
Look yonder at your daughter.

[BARBARA *lingers by the Ark-Tent, gazing with girlish interest at* MICHAEL, *who gazes at her, his bear-head in his hand for the moment.*]

JACOBUS

Barbara!

[*She turns back, with an angry glance at* KURT.]

AXEL *the Smith*
[*doggedly to them*]

By your leave, Masters! I would like to know,
How did Saint Willibald prevail with the rats? —
That would I like to know. I, who ha' made
Of strong wrought traps, two hundred, thirty-nine,
Two hundred, thirty-nine.

REYNARD
[*calling*]

And so would I!

HANS *the Butcher*

So please your worships, may it please the Crier,
Now we be here, — to cry the Piping Man —

PETER *the Cobbler*

A stranger-man, gay-clad, — in divers colors!
Because he, with said piping —

HANS *the Butcher*

— Drave away
The horde of rats!

PETER *the Cobbler*
[*sagely*]

To our great benefit;
And we be all just men.

OTHERS

Ay, ay! — Amen!

WOMEN

Amen, Our Lady and the blessed Saints!

JACOBUS

Why, faith, good souls, if ye will have him cried,
So be it. — But the ways of Heaven are strange!
Mark how our angel of deliverance came, —
Or it may be, Saint Willibald himself, —
Most piedly clothed, even as the vilest player! —
And straight ascended from us, to the clouds!

But cry him, if you will. — Peace to your lungs! —
He will not come.

[KURT *wrathfully consults with* JACOBUS, *then signals to Crier.*

CRIER

Oyez! Oyez! Oyez!
Whereas, now three days gone, our Plague of Rats
Was wholly driven hence, our City cleansed,
Our peace restored after sore threat of famine,
By a Strange Man who came not back again,
Now, therefore, if this Man have ears to hear,
Let him stand forth. — Oyez! Oyez! Oyez!

[*Trumpet.* — PEOPLE *gaze up and down the little streets.* — REYNARD *steps out of the Ark and comes down slowly, with a modest air.* — KURT *points him out, threateningly, and the* CROWD *bursts into derisive laughter.* — *He doffs his animal-head at leisure, showing a sparkling dark-eyed face.*

ALL

The Man! the Man!

KURT AND JACOBUS

The Devil! — 'T is —

ALL

— THE PIPER!

[*The* PIPER *regards them all with debonair satisfaction; then reverses his head-piece and holds it out upside-down, with a confident smile.*

PIPER

Three days of rest, your worships, you have had.
I see no signs of famine hereabout.
The rats are gone, even to the nethermost tail:
And I 've fulfilled my bargain. Is it granted?

[*Murmurs, then cheers of "Ay, Ay,* PIPER!" *from the crowd.*

Thank 'ee. — My thousand guilders, an you please.

JACOBUS

One thou— Come, come! This was no sober bargain. —
No man in reason could —

PIPER

One thousand guilders.

KURT

One thousand rogueries!

JACOBUS
[*to* PIPER]

You jest too far.

AXEL

Lucky, if he get aught! — Two hundred traps,
And nine, and thirty! By Saint Willibald,
When was I paid?

AXEL'S WIFE

Say, now!

PIPER

. . . One thousand guilders.

PETER *the Cobbler*

Give him an hundred.

HANS *the Butcher*

Double!

HANS' WIFE

You were fools
To make agreement with him. — Ask old Claus.
He has the guilders; and his house was full
O' rats!

OLD CLAUS

[*shaking his stick from the window*]

You jade! And I that hoard, and save,
And lay by all I have from year to year,
To build my monument when I am gone,
A fine new tomb there, in Saint Boniface!
And I to pay for all your city rats!

OLD URSULA

[*leaning out, opposite*]

Right, neighbor, right well said! — Piper, hark here.
Piper, how did ye charm the rats away?

PIPER

[*coming down*]

The rats were led — by Cu-ri-os-ity.
'T is so with many rats; and all old women; —
Saving your health!

JACOBUS

No thought for public weal,
In this base grasping on —

PIPER

One thousand guilders.

KURT

[*contemptuously*]

For piping!

PIPER

Shall I pipe them back again?

WOMEN

Merciful heaven! { Good Saint Boniface!
Good Saint Willibald!
Peter and Paul defend us!

HANS *the Butcher*

No, no; no fear o' that. The rats be drowned.
We saw them with our eyes.

PIPER

Now who shall say
There is no resurrection for a mouse?

KURT

— Do you but crop this fellow's ears ! —

VERONIKA

[*from the steps*]

Ah, Kurt !

JACOBUS

[*to him, blandly*]

Deal patiently, good neighbor. All is well.
[*To the* PIPER]
Why do you name a price so laughable,
My man? Call you to mind; you have no claim, —
No scrip to show. You cling upon —

PIPER

[*sternly*]

Your word.

JACOBUS

I would say — just —

PIPER

Your word.

JACOBUS

Upon—

PIPER

Your word.
Sure, 't was a rotten parchment!

JACOBUS

This is a base,
Conniving miser!

PIPER

[*turning proudly*]

Stand forth, Cheat-the-Devil!

[*Up steps the* DEVIL *in red.* PEOPLE *shrink, and then come closer.*

Be not afeard. He pleased you all, of late.
He hath no sting.—So, boy! Do off thy head.—

[CHEAT-THE-DEVIL *doffs his red headdress and stands forth, a pale and timorous youth, gentle and half-witted.*

Michael, stand forth!

[MICHAEL *comes down, bear-head in hand.*

BARBARA

[*regarding him sadly*]

That goodly sword-eater!

PIPER

[*defiantly*]

So, Michael, so. — These be two friends of mine.
Pay now an even third to each of us.
Or, to content your doubts, to each of these
Do you pay here and now, five hundred guilders.
Who gets it matters little, for us friends.
But you will pay the sum, friend. You will pay! —

HANS, AXEL, AND CROWD

Come, there's an honest fellow. Ay, now, pay!
— There's a good friend. — And would I had the same.
— One thousand guilders?
— No, too much.
— No, no.

KURT

Pay jugglers? — With a rope apiece!

JACOBUS

Why — so —

PIPER

They are my friends; and they shall share with me.

'T is time that Hamelin reckoned us for men;
— Hath ever dealt with us as we were vermin.
Now have I rid you of the other sort—
Right you that score! —

KURT

These outcasts!

PIPER

[*hotly*]

Say you so?
Michael, my man! Which of you here will try
With glass or fire, with him?

MICHAEL

[*sullenly*]

No, no more glass, to-day!

PIPER

Then fire and sword!

[*They back away.*]

So! — And there's not one man
In Hamelin, here, so honest of his word.
Stroller! A pretty choice you leave us. — Quit
This strolling life, or stroll into a cage!

What do you offer him? A man eats fire —
Swords, glass, young April frogs —

CHILDREN

Do it again!
Do it again!

PIPER

You say to such a man, —
'Come be a monk! A weaver!' Pretty choice.
Here 's Cheat-the-Devil, now.

PETER *the Cobbler*

But what 's his name?

PIPER

He does n't know. What would you? Nor do I.
But for the something he has seen of life,
Making men merry, he 'd know something more!
The gentlest devil ever spiked Lost Souls
Into Hell-mouth, — for nothing-by-the-day!

OLD URSULA

[*with her ear-trumpet*]

Piper, why do you call him Cheat-the-Devil?

PIPER

Because his deviltry is all a cheat: —
He is no devil, — but a gentle heart!
— Friend Michael here hath played the Devil, betimes,
Because he can so bravely breathe out fire.
He plied the pitchfork so we yelped for mercy, —
He reckoned not the stoutness of his arm! —
But Cheat-the-Devil here, — he would not hurt
Why — Kurt the Syndic — thrusting him in hell. [*Laughter.*

CHEAT-THE-DEVIL

[*unhappily*]

No, no — I will not hurt him!

PIPER

[*soothingly to him*]

Merry, boy!

[*To the townsfolk*]

And, — if ye will have reasons, good, — ye see, —
I want — one thousand guilders.

JACOBUS

In all surety,
Payment you 'll have, my man, But —

HANS *the Butcher*

As to 's friends, —
An that yon Devil be as feat wi' his hands
As he be slow o' tongue, why, I will take him
For prentice. Wife, — now that would smack
o' pride!

PETER *the Cobbler*

I 'll take this fellow that can swallow fire.
He 's somewhat old for me. But he can learn
My trade. — A pretty fellow!

PIPER

And your trade?

PETER *the Cobbler*

Peter the cobbler. —

MICHAEL

I? What, I? Make shoes?
[*Proudly*]
I swallow fire.

PIPER

Enough.

BARBARA
[*aside, bitterly*]

I 'll not believe it.

PIPER
[*to* HANS]

Your trade?

HANS *the Butcher*

I 'm Hans the Butcher.

MICHAEL

Butcher?

CHEAT-THE-DEVIL
[*unhappily*]

Butcher!
Oh, no! I could n't hurt them.

[*Loud laughter.*

BUTCHER'S WIFE

'T is a fool!

[*The* PIPER *motions to* MICHAEL *and* CHEAT-THE-DEVIL, *who during the following join the other player-folk, strike their tent, pack their bundles, and wheel off the bar-*

rows that have served them for an Ark, leaving the space clear before the Shrine. Exeunt Strollers, all but MICHAEL, *who hangs about, still gazing at* BARBARA.

JACOBUS

Good people, we have wasted time enow.
You see this fellow, that he has no writ —

PIPER

Why not, then? 'T was a bargain. If your word
Hold only when 't is writ —

KURT

We cannot spend
Clerkship on them that neither write nor read.
What good would parchment do thee?

JACOBUS

My good man —

PIPER

Who says I cannot read? — Who says I cannot?

OLD CLAUS

Piper, don't tell me you can read in books!

PIPER

[*at bay*]

Books! Where's a book? Shew me a book,
I say!

OLD URSULA

The Holy Book! Bring that — or he 'll bewitch
you.

PIPER

Oh, never fear. I charm but fools and chil-
dren;
Now that the rats are gone. — Bring me a Book:
A big one! —

[*Murmurs. The* PIPER *defiant. The crowd moves towards the Minster. Enter* ANSELM *the priest, with a little acolyte, — the two bearing a large illuminated Gospel-book.* ANSELM, *eyeing the* PIPER *gravely, opens the book, which the boy supports on his head and shoulders.*

PIPER

Ho, 't is too heavy! Come, you cherub-head,
Here 's too much laid upon one guardian angel!

[*Beckons another small boy, and sets the book on their two backs.*

Well? — well? What now?

[*He looks in frank bewilderment at the eager crowd.*

CROWD

Read, read!

KURT

He cannot read.

PIPER

[*to* ANSELM]

Turn — turn — there 's nothing there.

[ANSELM *turns pages.* PIPER *looks on blankly*]

. . . Ah, turn again!

The red one! —

[*He takes his pipe from his belt*]

No, the green! The green one. So.

[*Starts to pipe, looking on the book.*]

CROWD

Sure 't is a mad-man!
But hear him piping!
What is he doing?

PIPER

[*puzzled at their mirth*]

What the green one says. —

[*A burst of laughter from the crowd.* JAN, *the little lame boy on the steps, reaches his arms out suddenly and gives a cry of delight.*

JAN

Oh, I love the Man!

[*He goes, with his crutch, to the* PIPER, *who turns and gathers him close.*

JACOBUS

[*to the People*]

Leave off this argument.

KURT

Go in to Mass.

JACOBUS

Saint Willibald!

PIPER

[*in a rage*]

That Saint! —

KURT

Hence, wandering dog!

PIPER

Oho! — Well, every Saint may have his day.
But there are dog-days coming. — Eh, your worship?
[*To* ANSELM, *suddenly*]
You, there! You — Brother — Father — Uncle — You!
Speak! Will you let them in, to say their prayers
And mock me through their fingers? — Tell these men
To settle it, among their mouldy pockets,
Whether they keep their oath. Then will I go.

KURT

[*savagely*]
Away with you! —

ANSELM

The Piper should be heard;
Ye know it well. Render to Cæsar, therefore,
That which is Cæsar's.

PIPER

—Give the Devil his due!

JACOBUS
[*warily*]

We must take counsel over such a sum.

[*Beckoning others, he and* KURT *go into the Rathaus, followed by all the men. Exit* ANSELM *with the Holy Book into the Minster.* — *The children play Mouse, to and fro, round about the* PIPER. — *The women, some of them, spin on the doorsteps, with little hand distaffs, or stand about, gossiping.*

[*The* PIPER *wipes his forehead and goes up slowly (centre) to drink from the fountain at the foot of the Shrine.* — MICHAEL, *like one in a dream, comes down towards* BARBARA, *who gazes back at him, fascinated, through her laughter.*

BARBARA

Is it for pay you loiter, Master Player?
Were you not paid enough?

MICHAEL

No.— One more look.

BARBARA

Here, then.— Still not enough?

MICHAEL

No! One more smile.

BARBARA

[*agitated*]

Why would you have me smile?

MICHAEL

[*passionately*]

Oh, when you smiled,
It was— it was like sunlight coming through
Some window there,
[*Pointing to the Minster*]
— some vision of Our Lady.
[*She drops her flowers.— He picks them up and gives them back slowly.*

BARBARA

Who are you? You are some one in disguise.

MICHAEL
[*bitterly*]

A man—that passes for a mountebank.

BARBARA
[*eagerly*]

I knew!

MICHAEL

What then?

BARBARA

Thou art of noble birth.
'T is some disguise, this playing with the fire!

MICHAEL

Yes.—For to-day, I lord it with the fire.
But it hath burned me, here.
[*Touching his breast.*]
[*Overcome for the moment, she draws away.—The* PIPER, *coming down, speaks stealthily to* MICHAEL, *who is still gazing.*

PIPER

For all our sakes!
There is bad weather breeding.—Take to thy heels.

[BARBARA *turns back to see* MICHAEL *withdrawing reluctantly, and throws a rose to him with sudden gayety.*

BARBARA

Farewell to you, Sword-Swallower! — farewell!

MICHAEL

[*looking back*]

Farewell to you, my Lady, in-the-Moon.

[*Exit.*

[JAN *clings once more to the* PIPER, *while the other children hang about.* VERONIKA *calls to her boy, from the steps.*

VERONIKA

Darling. —

PIPER

[*drawing nearer*]

Is this your Boy?

VERONIKA

Ay, he is mine;
My only one. He loved thy piping so.

PIPER

And I loved his.

HANS' WIFE

[*stridently*]

Poor little boy! He's lame!

PIPER

'T is all of us are lame! But he, he flies.

VERONIKA

Jan, stay here if you will, and hear the pipe,
At Church-time.

PIPER

[*to him*]

Wilt thou?

JAN

[*softly*]

Mother lets me stay
Here with the Lonely Man.

PIPER

The Lonely Man?

[JAN *points to the Christ in the Shrine.* VERONIKA *crosses herself. The* PIPER *looks long at the little boy.*

VERONIKA

He always calls Him so.

PIPER

And so would I.

VERONIKA

It grieves him that the Head is always bowed,
And stricken. But he loves more to be here
Than yonder in the church.

PIPER

And so do I.

VERONIKA

What would you, darling, with the Lonely Man?
What do you wait to see?

JAN
[*shyly*]

To see Him smile.

[*The women murmur. The* PIPER *comes down further to speak to* VERONIKA.

PIPER

You are some foreign woman. Are you not?
Never from Hamelin!

VERONIKA

No.

AXEL'S WIFE
[*to her child*]

Then run along.
And ask the Piper if he 'll play again
The tune that charmed the rats.

ANOTHER

They might come back!

OLD URSULA
[*calling from her window*]

Piper! I want the tune that charmed the rats!
If they come back, I 'll have my grandson play
it.

PIPER

I pipe but for the children.

ILSE

[*dropping her doll and picking it up*]

Oh, do pipe
Something for Fridolin!

HANSEL

Oh, pipe at me!
Now I 'm a mouse! I 'll eat you up! Rr—rr!—

CHILDREN

Oh, pipe! Oh, play! Oh, play and make us dance!
Oh, play, and make us run away from school!

PIPER

Why, what are these?

CHILDREN

[*scampering round him*]

We 're mice, we 're mice, we 're mice! . . .
We 're mice, we 're mice! We 'll eat up everything!

MARTIN'S WIFE

[*calling*]

'T is church-time. La, what will the neighbors say?

ILSE

[*Waving her doll*]

Oh, please do play something for Fridolin!

AXEL'S WIFE

Do hear the child. She 's quite the little mother!

PIPER

A little mother? Ugh! How horrible.
That fairy thing, that princess, — no, that Child!
A little mother?

[*To her*]

Drop the ugly thing!

MARTIN'S WIFE

Now, on my word! and what 's amiss with mothers?
Are mothers horrible?

[*The* PIPER *is struck with painful memories.*]

PIPER

No, no. But — care
And want and pain and age . . .
[*Turns back to them with a bitter change of voice*]
And penny-wealth, —
And penny-counting. — Penny prides and fears —
Of what the neighbors say the neighbors say ! —

MARTIN'S WIFE

And were you born without a mother, then ?

ALL

Yes, you there ! Ah, I told you ! He 's no man.
He 's of the devil.

MARTIN'S WIFE

Who was your mother, then ?

PIPER

[*fiercely*]

Mine ! — Nay, I do not know. For when I saw her,
She was a thing so trodden, lost and sad,

I cannot think that she was ever young,
Save in the cherishing voice. — She was a stroller;
My father was a stroller. — So, you have it!
And since she clave to him, and hunger too,
The Church's ban was on her. — Either live,
Mewed up forever, — she! to be a nun;
Or keep her life-long wandering with the wind;
The very name of wife stript from her troth.
That was my mother. — And she starved and sang;
And like the wind, she roved and lurked and shuddered
Outside your lighted windows, and fled by,
Storm-hunted, trying to outstrip the snow,
South, south, and homeless as a broken bird, —
Limping and hiding! — And she fled, and laughed,
And kept me warm; and died! To you, a Nothing;
Nothing, forever, oh, you well-housed mothers!
As always, always for the lighted windows
Of all the world, the Dark outside is nothing;
And all that limps and hides there in the dark;
Famishing, — broken, — lost!

And I have sworn
For her sake and for all, that I will have
Some justice, all so late, for wretched men,
Out of these same smug towns that drive us forth
After the show!—Or scheme to cage us up
Out of the sunlight; like a squirrel's heart
Torn out and drying in the market-place.
My mother! Do you know what mothers are?—
Your children! Do you know them? Ah, not you!
There's not one here but it would follow me,
For all your bleating!

AXEL'S WIFE

Kuno, come away!

[*The children cling to him. He smiles down triumphantly.*

PIPER

Oho, Oho! Look you?—You preach—I pipe!

[*Reënter the men, with* KURT *and* JACOBUS, *from the Rathaus, murmuring dubiously.*

[*The* PIPER *sets down* JAN *and stands forth, smiling.*

JACOBUS
[*smoothly*]

H'm! My good man, we have faithfully debated
Whether your vision of so great a sum
Might be fulfilled,—as by some miracle.
But no. The moneys we administer
Will not allow it; nor the common weal.
Therefore, for your late service, here you have
Full fifteen guilders,
[*Holding forth a purse*]
and a pretty sum
Indeed, for piping!

KURT
[*ominously*]
Take them!

JACOBUS
Either that,
Or, to speak truly, nothing!
[*The* PIPER *is motionless*]
Come, come. Nay, count them, if you will.

KURT
Time goes!

PIPER

Ay. And your oath?

KURT

No more; Enough.

[*There is a sound of organ music from the Minster.*]

VERONIKA

[*beseechingly*]

Ah, Kurt!

KURT

[*savagely to the crowd*]

What do ye, mewling of this fellow's rights?
He hath none! — Wit ye well, he is a stroller,
A wastrel, and the shadow of a man!
Ye waste the day and dally with the law.
Such have no rights; not in their life nor body!
We are in no wise bound. Nothing is his.
He may not carry arms; nor have redress
For any harm that men should put on him,
Saving to strike a shadow on the wall!
He is a Nothing, by the statute-book;
And, by the book, so let him live or die,
Like to a masterless dog!

[*The* PIPER *stands motionless with head upraised, not looking at* KURT. *The people, half-cowed, half-doubting, murmur and draw back. Lights appear in the Minster; the music continues.* KURT *and* JACOBUS *lead in the people.* JACOBUS *picks up the money-purse and takes it with him.*

VOICES

[*laughing, drunkenly*]

One thousand guilders to a 'masterless dog'!

[*Others laugh too, pass by, with pity and derision for the* PIPER, *and echoes of* 'MASTERLESS DOG!' *Exeunt* WOMEN *and* MEN *to the Minster.*

Only the children are left, dancing round the motionless figure of the PIPER.

CHILDREN

Oh, pipe again! Oh, pipe and make us dance!
Oh, pipe and make us run away from school!
Oh, pipe and make believe we are the mice!

[*He looks down at them. He looks up at the houses. Then he signs to them, with his finger on his lips; and begins, very*

softly, to pipe the Kinder-spell. The old CLAUS *and* URSULA *in the windows seem to doze.*

The children stop first, and look at him, fascinated; then they laugh, drowsily, and creep closer, — JAN *always near. They crowd around him. He pipes louder, moving backwards, slowly, with magical gestures, towards the little by-streets and the closed doors. The doors open, everywhere.*

Out come the children: little ones in nightgowns; bigger ones, with playthings, toy animals, dolls. He pipes, gayer and louder. They pour in, right and left. Motion and music fill the air. The PIPER *lifts* JAN *to his shoulder (dropping the little crutch) and marches off, up the street at the rear, piping, in the midst of them all.*

Last, out of the Minster come tumbling two little acolytes in red, and after them, PETER *the Sacristan. He trips over them in his amazement and terror; and they are gone after the vanishing children before the church-people come out.*

The old folks lean from their windows.

OLD URSULA

The bell, the bell! the church bell! They 're bewitched!

[*Peter rushes to the bell-rope and pulls it. The bell sounds heavily. Reënter, from the church, the citizens by twos and threes and scores.*

OLD URSULA

I told ye all, — I told ye! — Devils' bargains!

[*The bell.*]

[KURT, JACOBUS, *and the others appear.*]

KURT

Peter the Sacristan! Give by the bell.
What means this clangor?

PETER *the Sacristan*

They 're bewitched! bewitched!

[*Still pulling and shouting.*]

URSULA

They 're gone!

KURT

Thy wits!

OLD CLAUS

They 're gone — they 're gone — they 're gone!

PETER *the Sacristan*

The children!

URSULA

— With the Piper! They 're bewitched!
I told ye so.

OLD CLAUS

— I saw it with these eyes!
He piped away the children.

[*Horror in the crowd. They bring out lanterns and candles.* VERONIKA *holds up the forgotten crutch.*

VERONIKA

Jan — my Jan!

KURT

[*to her*]

Thy boy! But mine, my three, all fair and straight. —

AXEL'S WIFE
[*furiously to him*]

'T was thy false bargain, thine; who would not pay
The Piper. — But we pay!

PETER *the Sacristan*

Bewitched, bewitched!
The boys ran out — and I ran after them,
And something red did trip me — 't was the Devil,
The Devil!

OLD URSULA

Ah, ring on, and crack the bell:
Ye 'll never have them back. — I told ye so!

[*The bell clangs incessantly.*]

Curtain

Act II

Act II

Scene I: *Inside 'the Hollow Hill.'*

A great, dim-lighted, cavernous place, which shows signs of masonry. It is part cavern and part cellarage of a ruined, burned-down and forgotten old monastery in the hills. — The only entrance (at the centre rear), a ramshackle wooden door, closes against a flight of rocky steps. — Light comes from an opening in the roof, and from the right, where a faggot-fire glows under an iron pot. — The scene reaches (right and left) into dim corners, where sleeping children lie curled up together like kittens.

By the fire sits the Piper, *on a tree-stump seat, stitching at a bit of red leather. At his feet is a row of bright-colored small shoes, set two and two. He looks up now and then, to recount the children, and goes back to work, with quizzical despair.*

Left, sits a group of three forlorn Strollers. One nurses a lame knee; one, evidently dumb,

talks in signs to the others; one is munching bread and cheese out of a wallet. All have the look of hunted and hungry men. They speak only in whispers to each other throughout the scene; but their hoarse laughter breaks out now and then over the bird-like ignorance of the children.

A shaft of sunlight steals through the hole in the roof. JAN, *who lies nearest the* PIPER, *wakes up.*

JAN

OH!

[*The* PIPER *turns*]

Oh, I thought . . . I had a dream!

PIPER

[*softly*]

Ahé?

JAN

I thought . . . I dreamed . . . somebody wanted me.

PIPER

Soho!

JAN

[*earnestly*]

I thought . . . Somebody Wanted me.

PIPER

How then?

[*With watchful tenderness.*]

JAN

I thought I heard Somebody crying.

PIPER

Pfui!— What a dream. — Don't make me cry again.

JAN

Oh, was it you? — Oh, yes!

PIPER

[*apart, tensely*]

No Michael yet!

[JAN *begins to laugh softly, in a bewildered way; then grows quite happy and forgetful. While the other children waken, he*

reaches for the pipe and tries to blow upon it, to the PIPER'S *amusement.* ILSE *and* HANSEL, *the Butcher's children, wake.*

ILSE

Oh!

HANSEL

— Oh!

PIPER

Ahé?

ILSE

I thought I had a dream.

PIPER

Again?

ILSE

. . . It was some lady, calling me.

HANSEL

Yes, and a fat man called us to come quick;
A fat man, he was crying — about me!
That same fat man I dreamt of, yesterday.

PIPER

Come, did you ever see a fat man cry,
About a little Boy?

[*The Strollers are convulsed with hoarse mirth.*

HANSEL

No, — Never.

ILSE

Never!
Oh, what a funny dream!

[*They giggle together.*]

[*The* PIPER *silences the Strollers, with a gesture of warning towards the rocky door.*

PIPER

[*to himself*]

'T is Hans the Butcher.

[*To the Children*]

Well, what did he say?

HANSEL

'*Come home, come home, come home!*' But I did n't go.
I don't know where . . . Oh, what a funny dream!

ILSE

Mine was a bad dream! — *Mine* was a lovely lady
And she was by the river, staring in.

PIPER

You were the little gold-fish, none could catch.
Oh, what a funny dream! . . .
[*Apart, anxiously*]
No Michael yet.
[*Aloud*]
Come, bread and broth! Here — not all, three at a time;
'T is simpler. Here, you kittens. Eat awhile;
Then —
[RUDI *wakes.*]

RUDI

Oh! I had a dream, — an awful dream!

[*The* PIPER *takes* JAN *on his knee and feeds him, after ladling out a big bowl of broth from the kettle for the Children, and giving them bread.*

PIPER

Oh! oh! I had a dream!

CHILDREN

Oh, tell it to us!

PIPER

I dreamed . . . a Stork . . . had nested in my hat.

CHILDREN

Oh!

PIPER

And when I woke —

CHILDREN

You had —

PIPER

One hundred children!

CHILDREN

Oh, it came true! Oh, oh; it all came true!

THE STROLLERS

Ah, ho, ho, ho!

[*The dumb one rises, stretches, and steals toward the entrance, stopping to slip a blind-patch over one eye. The* PIPER *goes to him with one stride, seizing him by the shoulder.*

PIPER

[*to him, and the others, apart*]

Look you. — No Michael *yet!* — And he is gone
Full three days now, — three days. If he be caught,
Why then, — the little ravens shall be fed!

[*Groans from the three*]

Enough that Cheat-the-Devil leaked out too; —
No foot but mine shall quit this fox-hole now!
And you, — think praise for once, you have no tongue,
And keep these magpies quiet. [*Turns away.*

[*To himself*]

Ah, that girl.
The Burgomeister's Barbara! But for her,

And moon-struck Michael with his 'one more look'!
Where is he now? — And where are we?
[*Turning back to the Children*] So, so.

[*The Strollers huddle together, with looks of renewed anxiety and wretchedness. — Their laughter at the Children breaks out forlornly now and then. — The* PIPER *shepherds the Children, but with watchful eyes and ears toward the entrance always. — His action grows more and more tense.*

RUDI
[*over his broth*]

Oh, I remember now! — Before I woke . . .
Oh, what an awful dream!

ILSE

Oh, tell us, Rudi, —
Oh, scare us, — Rudi, scare us! —

RUDI
[*bursting into tears*]

. . . *Lump was dead!*
Lump, Lump! — [*The Children wail.*

PIPER

[*distracted*]

Who's Lump? —

RUDI

Our Dog!

PIPER

[*shocked and pained*]

The Dog! — No, no.
Heaven save us — I forgot about the dogs!

RUDI

He Wanted me; — and I always was n't there!
And people tied him up, — and other people
Pretended that he bit. — He never bites!
He Wanted me, until it broke his heart,
And he was dead!

PIPER

[*struggling with his emotion*]

And then he went to heaven,
To chase the happy cats up all the trees; —
Little white cats! . . . He wears a golden
collar . . .

And sometimes — [*Aside*] — I 'd forgot about
the dogs!
Well, dogs must suffer, so that men grow wise.
'T was ever so.
[*He turns to give* JAN *a piping lesson.*]

CHILDREN

Oh, what a funny dream!
[*Suddenly he lifts his hand. They listen, and hear a dim sound of distant chanting, going by on some neighboring road. The* PIPER *is puzzled; the Strollers are plainly depressed.*

JAN

What is it?

PIPER

People; passing down below,
In the dark valley.
[*He looks at the Children fixedly*]
Do you want to see them?

CHILDREN

Don't let them find us! What an ugly noise. —
No, no — don't let them come!

PIPER

Hark ye to me.
Some day I 'll take you out with me to play;
High in the sun,—close to the water-fall. . . .
And we will make believe—*We 'll make believe*
We 're hiding! . . .
[*The Strollers rock with mirth.*]

CHILDREN

Yes, yes! Oh, let us make believe!

STROLLERS

Oho, ho, ho!—A make-believe!—Ho, ho!

PIPER

But, if you 're good,—yes, very, very soon
I 'll take you, as I promised,—

CHILDREN

—Gypsies, oh!

PIPER

Yes, with the gypsies. We shall go at night,
With just a torch—
[*Watching them.*]

CHILDREN

Oh!

PIPER

Like fire-flies! Will-o'-the-wisps!
And make believe we 're hiding, all the way,
Till we come out into a sunny land, —
All vines and sunlight, yes, and men that sing!
Far, far away — forever.
[*Gives* ILSE *a bowl to feed the other children*]

[JAN *pipes a measure of the Kinder-spell, brokenly. The* PIPER *turns.*

So! Thou 'lt be
My master, some day. Thou shalt pipe for me.

JAN

[*piping*]

Oh, was n't that one beautiful? — Now you!

PIPER

[*taking the pipe*]

The rainbow-bridge by day;
— And borrow a shepherd-crook!
At night we take to the Milky Way;
And then we follow the brook!

We'll follow the brook, whatever way
The brook shall sing, or the sun shall say,
Or the mothering wood-dove coos!
And what do I care, what else I wear,
If I keep my rainbow shoes!

[*He points to the little row of bright shoes. The Children scream with joy.* ILSE *and* HANSEL *run back.*

CHILDREN

Oh dear! What lovely shoes! Oh, which are mine?
Oh! Oh! — What lovely shoes! Oh, which are mine?

PIPER

Try, till you see.
[*Taking up a little red pair*]
But these, — these are for Jan.
[JAN *is perched on the tree-stump, shy and silent with pleasure.*

ILSE

Oh, those are best of all! And Jan —

PIPER

And Jan
Is not to trudge, like you. Jan is to wear
Beautiful shoes, and shoes made most of all,
To look at!

[*Takes up a pair of bird's wings.*]

CHILDREN

[*squealing*]

Oh! Where did you find the wings?
Bird's wings!

PIPER

There was some hunter in the woods,
Who killed more birds than he could carry home.
He did not want these, — though the starling did,
But could not use them more! And so, —

[*Fastening one to each heel*]

And so, —
They trim a little boy.

[*Puts them on* JAN. *He is radiant. He stretches out his legs and pats the feathers.*

CHILDREN

[*trying on theirs and capering*]

O Jan! — O Jan!

Oh! see my shoes!

[*The* PIPER *looks at* JAN.]

PIPER

Hey day, what now?

JAN

I wish . . .

PIPER

What do you wish? Wish for it! — It shall come.

[JAN *pulls him closer and speaks shyly.*]

JAN

I wish — that I could show them — to the Man,
The Lonely Man.

[*The* PIPER *looks at him and backs away; sits down helplessly and looks at him again.*

Oh, can I? —

PIPER

Thou! — 'T would make me a proud man.

JAN

Oh! it would make Him smile!

[*The Children dance and caper.* TRUDE *wakes up and joins them. Sound of distant chanting again.*

TRUDE

— I had a dream!

PIPER

A dream!

[*Pretending to be amazed. Reflects, a moment*]

I know! — Oh, what a funny dream!

[*The Children all fall a-laughing when he does. — Noise without. Cheat-the-Devil's voice crying, 'Cuckoo — Cuckoo!'*

CHEAT-THE-DEVIL

Quick, quick! — I 've something here.

[*The others roll away a big stone, and enter by the wooden door (rear),* CHEAT-THE-

DEVIL. *He does not wear his red hood. He has a garland round his neck, and a basket on his arm.*

PIPER

[*sharply to himself*]

No Michael yet!

[*To* CHEAT-THE-DEVIL]

Michael! — Where 's Michael?

CHEAT-THE-DEVIL

Look you, — you must wait.
We must be cunning. — There 's a squirrel, mark you,
Hopped after me! He would have found us out.
I wanted him; I loved him. But I ran.
For once a squirrel falls a-talking. — Ah!
Look what I have. — Guess, guess!

[*Showing his basket to the Children.*]

CHILDREN

Cakes!

[*He is sad*]

Shoes!
[*He is sadder*]
Then — honey!
[*He radiantly undoes his basket, and displays a honeycomb. The Strollers, too, rush upon him.*

PIPER

Ah, Cheat-the-Devil! They would crop your ears.
Where had you this?

CHEAT-THE-DEVIL

Why, such a kind old farmer!
He 'd left his bee-hives; they were all alone;
And the bees know me. So I brought this for you;
I knew They 'd like it. — Oh, you 're happy now!

PIPER

But Michael, — have they caught him?

CHEAT-THE-DEVIL

Oh, not they!
I heard no word of Michael; Michael 's safe!

Once on the road I met a countryman,
Asked me the way. And not a word I spoke!
'Tis far the wisest. Twenty riddles he asked me.
I smiled and wagged my head. Anon cries he,
'This Fool is deaf and dumb!'—That made me angry,
But still I spoke not.—And I would not hurt him!
He was a bad man. But I liked the mule.—
Now am I safe!—Now am I home at last!

PIPER

'St.—Met you any people on the way,
Singing?

CHEAT-THE-DEVIL

No, growling,—growling dreary psalms
All on a sunny day! Behind the hedges,
I saw them go. They go from Hamelin, now;
And I know why!—

[*The* PIPER *beckons him away from the Children.*

The mayor's Barbara
Must go to Rudersheim, to be a Nun!

PIPER

To be a Nun!

CHEAT-THE-DEVIL

A penance for them all.
She weeps; but she must go! All they, you see,
Are wroth against him. — He must give *his* child —

PIPER

A nun!

CHEAT-THE-DEVIL

[*nodding*]

Forever! — She, who smiled at Michael.
Look you, she weeps! They are bad people all; —
Nothing like these. [*Looking at the Children.*
These are all beautiful.

PIPER

To lock her up! A maiden, shut away
Out of the light. To cage her there for life,
Cut off her hair; pretend that she is dead! —
Horrible, horrible! No, I 'll not endure it.

I 'll end this murder. — He shall give up his;
But never so! — Not so! — While I do live
To let things out of cages! — Tell me, quick! —
When shall it happen?

CHEAT-THE-DEVIL

Why, it falls to-day.
I saw two herds of people going by,
To be there well aforetime, for the sight.
And she is going last of all, at noon;
All sparkling, like a Bride. — I heard them tell.

PIPER

No, never, never! — No, it shall not be!
Hist! —

[*Steps heard scrambling down the entrance-way.*

[*Enter* MICHAEL *in mad haste. They rush upon him with exultation and relief. He shakes them off, doggedly.*

PIPER

So! — You had like to have hanged us.

MICHAEL

— What of that?

PIPER

All for a lily maiden.

MICHAEL

Ah, — thy pipe!
How will it save her? — *Save her!* — Tune thy pipe
To compass that! — You do not know —

PIPER

I know.
Tell me no more. — I say it shall not be!
To heel, lad! No, I follow, — none but I!
Go, — go! [MICHAEL *rushes out again.*
[*To* CHEAT-THE-DEVIL, *pointing to the Children*]
Do you bide here and shepherd these.

CHILDREN

Where are you going? — Take us too! — us too! —
Oh, take us with you? — Take us!

PIPER

[*distracted*]

No, no, no!
You shall be kittens all. And chase your tails,
Till I come back! — So here!

[*Catches* HANSEL *and affixes to his little jacket a long strip of leather for a tail; then whirls him about.*

CHILDREN

Me too! — Me too!

CHEAT-THE-DEVIL

Let me make tails, — let me!

[*Seizing shears and leather.*]

PIPER

[*wildly*]

Faith, and you shall.
A master tailor! — Come, here's food for thought.
Think all, —

[*To the Strollers*]

And hold your tongues, there! —
If a Cat —

If a Cat have — as all men say — Nine Lives,
And if Nine Tailors go to make a Man,
How long, then, shall it take one Man turned Tailor
To keep a Cat in Tails, until she die?

[CHEAT-THE-DEVIL *looks subdued; the children whirl about.*

But here's no game for Jan. — Stay! Something else. —

[*He runs to a wooden coffer, rear, and takes out a long crystal on the end of a string, with a glance at the shaft of sunlight from the roof. The Children watch.*

Be quiet, now. — Chase not your tails too far,
Till I come home again.

CHILDREN

Come home — come home!

PIPER

And you shall see my —

CHILDREN

Something Beautiful!

Oh, oh, what is it? — Oh, and will it play?
Will it play music?

PIPER

Yes.

[*He hangs the crystal in the sun. A Rainbow strikes the wall.*

— The best of all!

CHEAT-THE-DEVIL, JAN, CHILDREN

Oh, oh, how beautiful, — how beautiful!

PIPER

And hear it pipe and call, and dance, and sing.
Héjà! — And hark you all. You have to mind —
The Rainbow!

[*He climbs out, pipe in hand. The Children whirl about after their tails.* — CHEAT-THE-DEVIL, *and* JAN *on his tree-stump, open-mouthed with happiness, watch the Rainbow.*

Curtain

SCENE II: *The Cross-ways: on the Long Road to Rudersheim.*

A wooded country: high hills at back. The place is wild and overgrown, like the haunted spot it is reputed to be. In the foreground, right, a ruined stone well appears, in a mass of weeds and vines. Opposite, left, tall trees and dense thickets. Where the roads cross (to left of centre), stands a large, neglected shrine, with a weather-worn figure of Christ,—again the 'Lonely Man,'—facing towards Hamelin.—The stage is empty, at rise of the curtain; but the sound of chanting from burghers just gone by fades slowly, on the road to Rudersheim.

From the hillside at the rear comes the PIPER, *wrapped in a long green cloak, his pipe in his hand. He looks after the procession, and back to Hamelin.—Enter, springing from the bushes to the right,* MICHAEL, *who seizes him. Their speech goes breathlessly.*

MICHAEL

QUICK!—tell me—

PIPER

—Patience.

MICHAEL

Patience? — Death and hell!
Oh, save her — save her! Give the children back.

PIPER

Never. Have you betrayed us?

MICHAEL

I! — betrayed?

PIPER

So, so, lad.

MICHAEL

But to save her —

PIPER

There 's a way, —
Trust me! I save her, or we swing together
Merrily, in a row. — How did you see her?

MICHAEL

By stealth: two days ago, at evening,
Hard by the vine-hid wall of her own garden,

I made a warbling like a nightingale;
And she came out to hear.

PIPER

A serenade!
Under the halter!

MICHAEL

Hush. — A death-black night,
Until she came. — Oh, how to tell thee, lad!
She came, — she came, not for the nightingale,
But even dreaming that it would be I!

PIPER

She knew you? — We are trapped, then.

MICHAEL

No, not so!
She smiled on me. — Dost thou remember how
She smiled on me that day? Alas, poor maid,
She took me for some noble in disguise!
And all these days, — she told me, — she had dreamed
That I would come to save her!

PIPER

Said she this?

MICHAEL

All this — all this, and more! . . .
What could lies do? — I lied to her of thee;
I swore I knew not of thy vanishment,
Nor the lost children. But I told her true,
I was a stroller and an outcast man
That hid there, like a famished castaway,
For one more word, without a hope, — a hope;
Helpless to save her.

PIPER

And she told thee then,
She goes to be a nun?

MICHAEL

Youth to the grave!
And I — vile nothing — cannot go to save her,
Only to look my last —

PIPER

Who knows?

MICHAEL
[*bitterly*]

Ah, thou!—

PIPER

Poor Nightingale!
[*Fingers his pipe, noiselessly.*]

MICHAEL
[*rapt with grief*]

Oh, but the scorn of her!

PIPER

She smiled on thee.

MICHAEL

Until she heard the truth:—
A juggler,—truly,—and no wandering knight!
Oh, and she wept.
[*Wildly*]
Let us all hang together.

PIPER

Thanks. Kindly spoken.— Not this afternoon!

MICHAEL

Thou knowest they are given up for dead?

PIPER

Truly.

MICHAEL

Bewitched?

PIPER

So are they.

MICHAEL

Sold to the Devil?

PIPER

[*Pacing softly up and down, with the restless cunning of a squirrel at watch*]

Pfui! But who else? Of course. This same old Devil!
This kind old Devil takes on him all we do!
Who else is such a refuge in this world?
Who could have burned the abbey in this place,
Where holy men did live? Why, 't was the Devil!

And who did guard us one secluded spot
By burying a wizard at this cross-ways? —
So none dare search the haunted, evil place!
The Devil for a landlord! — So say I!
And all we poor, we strollers, for his tenants;
We gypsies and we pipers in the world,
And a few hermits and sword-swallowers,
And all the cast-aways that Holy Church
Must put in cages — cages — to the end!
[*To Michael, who is overcome*]
Take heart! I swear, — by all the stars that chime!
I'll not have things in Cages!

MICHAEL

Barbara!
So young, — so young and beautiful!

PIPER

And fit
To marry with friend Michael!

MICHAEL

Do not mock.

PIPER

I mock not. — (Baa — Baa — Barbara !)

MICHAEL

Ay, she laughed,
On that first day. But still she gazed. — I saw
Her, all the while ! I swallowed —

PIPER

Prodigies !
A thousand swallows, and no summer yet !
But now, — 't is late to ask, — why did you not
Swallow her father ? — That had saved us all.

MICHAEL

They will be coming soon. They will cut off
All her bright hair, — and wall her in forever.

PIPER

Never. They shall not.

MICHAEL
[*dully*]

Will you give them back,
Now ?

PIPER

I will never give them back. Be sure.

MICHAEL

And she is made an offering for the town!
I heard it of the gossips. — They have sworn
Jacobus shall not keep his one ewe-lamb
While all the rest go childless.

PIPER

And I swear
That he shall give her up, — to none but thee!

MICHAEL

You cannot do it!

PIPER

Have I lived like Cain,
But to make good one hour of Life and Sun?
And have I got this Hamelin in my hands,
To make it pay its thousand cruelties
With such a fool's *one-more?* . . .
— You know right well,
'T was not the thousand guilders that I wanted

For thee, or me, or any! — Ten would serve.
But there it ached; *there*, in the money-bag
That serves the town of Hamelin for an heart!
That stab was mortal! And I thrust it deep.
Life, life, I wanted; safety, — sun and wind! —
And but to show them how that daily fear
They call their faith, is made of blasphemies
That would put out the Sun and Moon and Stars,
Early, for some last judgment!

[*He laughs up to the tree-tops*]

And the Lord,
Where will He get His harpers and singing-men
And them that laugh for joy? — From Hamelin guilds? —
Will you imagine Kurt the Councillor
Trying to sing?

[*He looks at his pipe again; then listens intently.*

MICHAEL

His lean throat freeze! — But she —
Barbara! Barbara! —

PIPER

Patience. She will come,
Dressed like a bride.

MICHAEL

Ah, do not mock me so.

PIPER

I mock not.

MICHAEL

She will never look at me.

PIPER

Rather than be a nun, I swear she will
Look at thee twice, — and with a long, long look.

[*Chant approaches in the distance, coming from Hamelin.*

VOICES

Dies irae, dies illa
Solvet saeclum in favilla,
Teste David cum Sibylla.

Quantus tremor est futurus,
Quando judex est venturus,
Cuncta stricte discussurus!

PIPER

Bah, how they whine! Why do they drag it so?

MICHAEL
[*overcome*]

Oh, can it be the last of all? O Saints! —
O blessed Francis, Ursula, Catherine!
Hubert — and Crispin — Pantaleone — Paul!
George o' the Dragon! — Michael the Archangel!

PIPER

Michael Sword-eater, canst not swallow a chant?
The well, the well! — Take care.

VOICES
[*nearer*]

Inter oves locum praesta,
Et ab hoedis me sequestra,
Statuens in parte dextra.

Confutatis maledictis,
Flammis acribus addictis:
Voca me cum benedictis.

[MICHAEL *climbs down the ancient well, reaching his head up warily, to see. The* PIPER *waves to him debonairly, points*

to the tree-tops, left, and stands a moment showing in his face his disapproval of the music. He fingers his pipe. As the hymn draws near, he scrambles among the bushes, left, and disappears.

Enter slowly, chanting, the company of burghers from Hamelin, — men together first, headed by priests; then the women. — ANSELM *and all the townsfolk appear (saving* VERONIKA, *the wife of* KURT); JACOBUS *is meek;* KURT *very stern. — As they appear, the piping of the Dance-spell begins softly, high in air. The hymn wavers; when the first burghers reach the centre of the stage, it breaks down.*

They look up, bewildered; then, with every sign of consternation, struggle, and vacant fear, they begin to dance, willy-nilly. Their faces work; they struggle to walk on; but it is useless. The music whirls them irresistibly into a rhythmic pace of $\frac{3}{4}$ time, and jogs their words, when they try to speak, into the same dance-measure. One by one, — two and two they go, — round and round like corks at first, with every sign of struggle and protest, then off, on the long road

to Rudersheim. Fat priests waltz together. — KURT *the fierce and* JACOBUS *the sleek hug each other in frantic endeavor to be released. Their words jolt insanely.*

KURT, JACOBUS

No, no. — No, no — No, no. — No, no!
Yes, yes. — I, yes. — Yes, yes. — Yes, yes!

SOME

La — crymos — a — Dies — ill —
Bewitched — the Devil! — bewitched — bewitched!
I will not — will not — will — I will!
No, no — but where! — Help — help! — To arms!

OTHERS

Suppli — canti — suppli — Oh!
To Hamelin — back — to Hamelin — stay!
No, no! — No, no, — Away, — away!

[*They dance out, convulsively, towards Rudersheim.* KURT *and* JACOBUS, *still whirling, cry,* —

JACOBUS, KURT

{Yes, yes! — yes, yes! — Let go — let go —
No, no! — I will not — No! . . . No!

[*Exeunt left, dancing.*

OTHERS

{Keep time, keep time! Have mercy! — Time!
Oh, let me — go! — Let go — let go!
Yes, yes — Yes, yes — No, no — no — no!

[BARBARA *appears, pale and beautiful; — richly dressed in white, with flowing locks. She is wan and exhausted. — The dance-mania, as it seizes her, makes her circle slowly and dazedly with a certain pitiful silliness. The nuns and monks accompanying her point in horror. But they, too, dance off with each other, willy-nilly, — like leaves in a tempest.* BARBARA *is left alone, still circling slowly. The piping sounds softer. She staggers against a tree, and keeps on waving her hands and turning her head, vaguely, in time.*

MICHAEL *looks forth from the well; then climbs out and approaches her.*

MICHAEL

She is so beautiful, — how dare I tell her?
My heart, how beautiful! The blessed saint! . . .
Fear nothing, fairest Lady. — You are saved.
[*She looks at him unseeingly, and continues to dance. — He holds out his arms to stop her.*
Pray you, the danger's gone. Pray you, take breath!
Poor, shining dove, — I would not hold thee here,
Against thy wish. — 'T is Michael, the sword-eater.

[*The piping ceases.*]

BARBARA

[*murmuring*]

Yes, yes — I must — I must — I must . . .

[*Reënter the* PIPER *from the thickets.*]

MICHAEL

Look, I will guard you like a princess, here;
Yes, like Our Lady's rose-vine.

BARBARA

[*gasping*]

Ah, my heart!

[*The* PIPER *comes towards her. She sees him and holds out her arms, crying:* —

Oh, he has saved me! — I am thine — thine — thine!

[*Falls into his arms half-fainting. The* PIPER *stands amazed, alarmed, chagrined.*

PIPER

Mine?

MICHAEL

[*furiously*]

Thine? — So was it? All a trap? Cock's blood!

Thine, thine! — And thou hast piped her wits away.

Thine!

PIPER

[*holding her off*]

No, not mine!

BARBARA
[*to him*]

Why did you steal me hence?
When did you love me? — Was it on first sight?

PIPER
[*confounded*]

I, love thee?

MICHAEL

— *Knave! thief! liar!*

PIPER

— Give me breath.
[*Holds off* BARBARA *gently.*]

BARBARA

Where are you taking me?

PIPER

I? Taking thee?

MICHAEL
[*to her*]

He shall not steal thee!

BARBARA

[*in a daze*]

I must follow him.

PIPER

No! 'T is too much. You shall not follow me!
I 'll not be followed. — Damsel, sit you down.
Here is too much! I love you not.

BARBARA

[*wonderingly*]

You do not?
Why did you pipe to me?

MICHAEL

— And steal her wits,
Stealer of all the children!

BARBARA

[*vaguely*]

Are they safe?

PIPER

[*to* MICHAEL]

Oh, your good faith! —

[*To her*]

They 're safe.

BARBARA

I knew — I knew it!

PIPER

And so art thou. But never shall they go
To Hamelin more; and never shalt *thou* go
To be a nun.

BARBARA

To be a nun, — no, no! Ah me, I 'm spent.
Sir, take me with you.

MICHAEL

[*still enraged, to the* PIPER]

Rid her of the spell!
Is this thy pledge?

PIPER

[*distracted*]

I do but rub my wits —
To think — to think.

[*To himself*]

What shall I do with her,
Now that she 's here! — Suppose her bound to stay!

[*To them*]
Hearken. — You, Michael, on to Rudersheim —

MICHAEL

And leave her here? No, no!

PIPER

Then take the girl.

BARBARA

To Rudersheim? No, never, never!

PIPER

Well . . .
Hearken. — There is the hermit, over the hill.
[*Apart, wildly*]
But how — suppose she will not marry him?
I will not take her where the children are.
And yet —
[*An idea strikes him. To her*]
Hark, now; — hark, now, and tell me truly:
Can you spin cloth?

BARBARA
[*amazed*]
I? Spin?

PIPER
[*eagerly*]
Can you make shoes?

BARBARA
I — *I* make shoes! — Fellow!

PIPER
So.

MICHAEL
Art thou mad!

PIPER
With me you may not go! But you 'll be safe.
Hearken: — you, Michael, go to Rudersheim;
And tell the nuns —

BARBARA
No, no! I dare not have it!
Oh, they would send and take me! No, no, no!

PIPER
Would you go back to Hamelin?

BARBARA

No — no — no!
Ah, I am spent.

[*Droops towards the* PIPER; *falters and sinks down on the bank beside the well, in a swoon.* — *The* PIPER *is abashed and rueful for the moment.*

MICHAEL

All this, your work!

PIPER

[*looking at her closely*]

Not mine.
This is no charm. It is all youth and grief,
And weariness. And she shall follow you. —
Tell the good nuns you found her sore bewitched,
Here in this haunt of 'devils'; — clean distraught.
No Church could so receive a dancing nun!
Tell them thou art an honest, piteous man
Desires to marry her.

MICHAEL

Marry the Moon!

PIPER

No, no, the Moon for me! — She shall be yours;
And here she sleeps, until her wits be sound.
[*He spreads his cloak over her, gently*]
The sun 's still high. 'T is barely afternoon. —
[*Looks at the sunshine. A thought strikes him with sudden dismay*]
'T is — no, the time is going! — On my life,
I had forgot Them! — And They will not stay
After the Rainbow fades.

MICHAEL
[*confounded*]

Art thou moon-mad?

PIPER
[*madly*]

No. Stir not! Keep her safe! I come anon.
But first I go. — They 'll not mind Cheat-the-Devil!
They 'll creep, to find out where the Rainbow went.
I know them! So would I! — They 'll all leak out!

MICHAEL

Stay — stay!

PIPER

No; guard her, you! — Anon, anon!

MICHAEL

But you will pipe her up and after you!

PIPER

[*flinging him the pipe from his belt*]

Do you fear this? Then keep it till I come.
You bide! — The Other cannot.

MICHAEL

Who?

PIPER

The Rainbow,
The Rainbow! —

[*He runs madly up the hillside, and away.*]

Curtain

Act III

Act III

Scene: *The same, later.* Barbara *lies motionless, still sleeping.* — Michael, *sitting on the bank opposite, fingers the pipe with awe and wistfulness. He blows softly upon it; then looks at the girl hopefully. She does not stir.*
Enter the Piper, *from the hills at back. He carries a pair of water-jars slung over his shoulders, and seems to be in high feather.*

Piper

[*singing*]

Out of your cage,
Come out of your cage
And take your soul on a pilgrimage!
Pease in your shoes, an if you must! —
But out and away, before you're dust:
Scribe and Stay-at-home,
Saint and Sage,
Out of your cage,
Out of your cage! —

[*He feigns to be terror-struck at sight of the pipe in Michael's hands*]

Ho, help! Good Michael, Michael, loose the charm!
Michael, have mercy! I'm bewitched!—

MICHAEL

[*giving him the pipe*]

Cock's faith!
Still mocking!—Well ye know, it will not play
Such games for me.

PIPER

Be soothed,—'t was as I guessed.
[*Unslings the jars*]
All of them hungry,—and the Rainbow going;—
And Cheat-the-Devil pining in a corner.
'T was well I went: they were for leaking out,
And then,—lopped ears for two!

MICHAEL

Oh, that will come.

PIPER

Never believe it! We have saved her, look you;

We save them all! No prison walls again,
For anything so young, in Hamelin there.
Wake her, and see.

MICHAEL

Ay, wake her. But for me,
Her sleep is gentler.

PIPER

[*comfortingly*]

Nay, but wait. — Good faith,
Wait. We have broke the bars of iron now;
Still there are golden! — 'Tis her very self
Is caged within herself. Once coax her out,
Once set her own heart free! —

MICHAEL

Wake her, and see!

[*The* PIPER *crosses, humming.*]

PIPER

Mind your eyes, tune your tongue!
Let it never be said, but sung, but sung,
'Out of your cage, out of your cage!'
Maiden, maiden, —

[*He wakes her gently.* BARBARA *sits up, plainly bewildered; then she sees the* PIPER, *and says happily:* —

BARBARA

Oh! — you have come to save me. They are gone.
All this, for love of me!

PIPER
[*ruefully*]

No, no — I — *No!*

BARBARA

You — you are robbers?
[*Her hands go to the pearls about her neck.*]

PIPER
[*indignant*]

No! Blood on the Moon!
This is the maddest world I ever blinked at. —
Fear nothing, maiden. I will tell you all.
Come, sit you down; and Michael shall keep watch

From yonder hillock, lest that any pass.
Fear nothing. None will pass: they are too sure
The Devil hath this cross-ways! — Sit you down.

MICHAEL *watches, with jealous wistfulness, from the road (left rear).* — BARBARA *half fearfully sits up, on the bank by the well.*

BARBARA

Not love? And yet . . . you do not want my pearls?
Then why —

PIPER

For why should all be love or money?
Money! Oho, — that mouldy thousand guilders
You think of! — But it was your Hamelin friends
That loved the guilders, and not I.

BARBARA

Then why —
Why did you steal me hence?

PIPER

Why did yourself
Long to be stolen?

BARBARA

[*shuddering*]

Ah! to be shut up . . .
Forever, — young — alive!

PIPER

Alive and singing;
Young, — young; — and four thick walls and no more sun,
No music, and no wandering, and no life!
Think you, I would not steal all things alive
Out of such doom? — How can I breathe and laugh
While there are things in cages? — You are free;
And you shall never more go back again.

BARBARA

And you, who are you then?

PIPER

How do *I* know?
Moths in the Moon! — Ask me a thing in reason.

BARBARA

And 't was not . . . that you loved me.

PIPER

Loved thee? No! —
Save but along with squirrels, and bright fish,
And bubbling water.

BARBARA

Then where shall I go?

PIPER

Oh, little bird, — is that your only song?
Go? Everywhere! Here be no walls, no hedges,
No tolls, no taxes, — rats nor aldermen!
Go, say you? Round the world, and round again!

[*Apart*]

— Ah, she was Hamelin-born.

[*He watches her*]

But there 's a man, —
Sky-true, sword-strong, and brave to look upon ;
One that would thrust his hand in dragon's mouth
For your bright sake ; one that would face the Devil,
Would swallow fire —

BARBARA

You would ?

PIPER

[*desperately*]

I ? — No, not I !
Michael, — yon goodman Michael.

BARBARA

[*bitterly*]

A stroller ! — oh, nought but a wandering man.

PIPER

Well, would you have a man take root, I ask ?

BARBARA

That swallows swords. . . .

PIPER

Is he a comely man?

BARBARA

That swallows swords! —

PIPER

What's manlier to swallow?
Did he but swallow pancakes, were that praise?
Pancakes and sausage, like your Hamelin yokels?
He swallows fire and swords, I say, and more.
And yet this man hath for a whole noon-hour
Guarded you while you slept; — still as a dove,
Distant and kind as shadow; giant-strong
For his enchanted princess, — even you.

BARBARA

So you bewitched me, then.

PIPER

[*wildly*]

How do I know?

BARBARA

Where are the children?

PIPER

I 'll not tell you that.
You are too much of Hamelin.

BARBARA

You bewitched them!

PIPER

Yes, so it seems. But how? — Upon my life,
'T is more than I know, — yes, a little more.
[*Rapidly: half in earnest and half in whimsy*]
Sometimes it works, and sometimes no. There are
Some things upon my soul, I cannot do.
[*Watching her.*]

BARBARA

[*expectantly*]

Not even with thy pipe?

PIPER

Not even so.
Some are too hard. — Yet, yet, I love to try:
And most, to try with all the hidden charms
I have, that I have never counted through.

BARBARA

[*fascinated*]

Where are they?

PIPER

[*touching his heart*]

Here.

BARBARA

What are they?

PIPER

How do I know?
If I knew all, why should I care to live?

No, no! The game is What-Will-Happen-Next?

BARBARA

And what will happen?

PIPER

[*tantalizingly*]

Ah! how do I know?
It keeps me searching. 'T is so glad and sad
And strange to find out, What-Will-Happen-Next!
And mark you this: the strangest miracle . . .

BARBARA

Yes!—

PIPER

Stranger than the Devil or the Judgment;
Stranger than piping,—even when *I* pipe!
Stranger than charming mice—or even men—

BARBARA

[*with tense expectancy*]

What is it? What?

PIPER

[*watching her*]

Why, — what may come to pass
Here in the heart. There is one very charm —

BARBARA

Oh!

PIPER

Are you brave?

BARBARA

[*awe-struck*]

Oh!

PIPER

[*slowly*]

Will you drink the philter?

BARBARA

'T is . . . some enchantment?

PIPER

[*mysteriously*]

'T is a love philter.

BARBARA

Oh, tell me first —

PIPER

Why, sooth, the only charm
In it, is Love. It is clear well-water.

BARBARA
[*disappointed*]

Only well-water?

PIPER

Love is only **Love.**
It must be philters, then?

[*He comes down smiling and beckons to* MICHAEL, *who draws near, bewildered.*
This lady thirsts
For magic!

[*He ties a long green scarf that he has over his shoulder, to a water-jar, and lowers it down the old well; while* BARBARA *watches, awe-struck. He continues to sing softly.*

Mind your eyes,
Tune your tongue;

Let it never be said,
But sung, — but sung! —

. . . . . .

MICHAEL

[*to* BARBARA, *timidly*]

I am glad at least, fair lady,
To think how my poor show did give you pleasure
That day — that day when —

BARBARA

Ah! that day of doom!

MICHAEL

What is your will?

BARBARA

[*passionately*]

I know not; and I care not!
[*Apart*]
Oh, it is true. — And he a sword-eater!
[*The* PIPER *hauls up the jar, full of water.*]

PIPER

Michael, your cup.

[MICHAEL *gives him a drinking-horn from his belt. The* PIPER *fills it with water, solemnly, and turns to* BARBARA, *who is at first defiant, then fascinated.*

Maiden, your ears. So: — hearken.
Before you drink of this, is it your will
Forever to be gone from Hamelin?

BARBARA

I must, — I must.

PIPER

Your mother?

BARBARA

[*piteously*]

I have no mother;
Nor any father, more. He gave me up.

PIPER

That did he! — For a round one thousand guilders!

Weep not, I say. First, loose you, heart and
shoes,
From Hamelin. Put off now, the dust, the
mould,
The cobble-stones, the little prying windows;
The streets that dream o' *What the Neighbors*
Say.
Think you were never born there. Think some
Breath
Wakened you early — early on one morning,
Deep in a Garden (but you knew not whose),
Where voices of wild waters bubbling ran,
Shaking down music from glad mountain-
tops, —
Where the still peaks were burning in the dawn,
Like fiery snow, — down into greenest valleys,
That do off their blue mist only to show
Some deeper blue, some haunt of violets.
No voice you heard, nothing you felt or saw,
Save in your heart, the tumult of young birds,
A nestful of wet wings and morning-cries,
Throbbing for flight! . . .
Then, — for your Soul, new wakened, felt athirst,
You turned to where that call of water led,
Laughing for truth, — all truth and star-like
laughter!

Beautiful water, that will never stay,
But runs and laughs and sparkles in the heart,
And sends live laughter trickling everywhere,
And knows the thousand longings of the Earth!
And as you drank it then, so now, drink here;

[*He reaches her the horn. She has listened, motionless, like a thing bewitched, her eyes fixed and wide, as if she were sleep-walking. She drinks.* MICHAEL *stands near, also motionless. When she speaks, it is in a younger voice, shy, sweet and full of wonder.*

And tell me, — tell me, you, — what happened then?
What do you see?

BARBARA

Ah! —

[*She looks before her with wide, new eyes.*]

PIPER

Do you see — a —

BARBARA

. . . Michael!

PIPER

So! — And a good one. And you call him? —

BARBARA

. . . Michael.

PIPER

So. — 'T is a world of wonders, by my faith! —
What is the fairest thing you see but —

BARBARA

Michael.

PIPER

And is he comely as a man should be?
And strong? — And wears good promise in his eyes,
And keeps it with his heart and with his hands?
[*She nods like a child*]
And would you fear to go with him? —

BARBARA

No, no!

PIPER

Then reach to him that little hand of yours.

[MICHAEL, *wonder-struck, runs to the jar, pours water upon his hand, rubs it off with haste, and falls on his knees before her, taking her hand fearfully.*

BARBARA
[*timidly*]

And can he talk? —

PIPER

Yes, yes. — The maid 's bewildered.
Fear nothing. Thou 'rt so dumb, man! — Yes, yes, yes.
Only he kneels; he cannot yet believe.
Speak roundly to him. — Will you go with him?
He will be gentler to you than a father:
He would be brothers five, and dearest friend,
And sweetheart, — ay, and knight and serving-man!

BARBARA

Yes, yes, I know he will. And can he talk, too?

PIPER

Lady, you have bewitched him.

MICHAEL

Oh! dear Lady,
With you — with you, I dare not ope my mouth
Saving to sing, or pray!

PIPER

Let it be singing!
Lad, 't is a wildered maiden, with no home
Save only thee; and she is more a child
Than yesterday.

MICHAEL

Oh, lordly, wondrous world! —
How is it, Sweet, you smile upon me now?

BARBARA

Sure I have ever smiled on thee. How not?
Art thou not Michael? — *And thou lovest me.*
And I love thee! — If I unloved thee ever,
It was some spell. —
[*Rapturously*]
But this, — ah, *This is I!*

[MICHAEL, *on his knees, winds his arms about her.*

PIPER

[*softly*]

It is all true, — all true. Lad, do not doubt;
The golden cage is broken.

MICHAEL

Oh! more strange
Than morning dreams! I am like one new-born;
I am a speechless babe. — And this is she,
My Moon I cried for, — here, —

PIPER

It is thy bride.

MICHAEL

Thou wilt not fear to come with me?

BARBARA

With thee?
With thee! Ah, look! What have I more than thee?
And thou art mine, tall fellow! How comes it now
Right happily that I am pranked so fair!
[*She touches her fineries, her long pearl-strings, joyously*]

And all this came so near to burying;
This!

MICHAEL

And this dearer gold.
[*Kissing her hair.*]

BARBARA

All, all for thee! —
[*She leans over in a playful rapture and binds her hair about him*]
Look, — I will be thy garden that we lost,
Yea, everywhere, — in every wilderness.
There shall none fright us with a flaming sword!
But I will be thy garden!
[*There is the sound of a herd-bell approaching.*

PIPER

See, — how the sunlight soon shall pour red wine
To make your marriage-feast! — And do you hear
That faery bell? — No fear! — 'T is some white creature,

Seeking her whiter lamb. — Go; find our hermit;
And he shall bless you, — as a hermit can!
And be your pledge for shelter. There's the path. —
[*To* MICHAEL]
Follow each other, close!

MICHAEL

Beyond the Sun!

PIPER

A golden afternoon, — and all is well!

[*He gives* MICHAEL *his cloak to wrap round* BARBARA. *They go, hand in hand, up into the hills. The herd-bell sounds softly.* — *The* PIPER *cocks his head like a squirrel, and listens with delight. He watches the two till they disappear; then comes down joyously.*

PIPER

If you can only catch them while they're young!

[*The herd-bell sounds nearer. He lets down a water-jar into the well again. The*

nearness of the bell startles him. He becomes watchful as a wild creature. It sounds nearer and nearer. A woman's voice calls like the wind: 'Jan! Jan!'—.

The PIPER, *tense and cautious, moves softly down into the shrubbery by the well.*

VERONIKA'S VOICE

Jan!

PIPER

Hist! Who dared?

VERONIKA'S VOICE

. . . Jan!—

PIPER

Who dared, I say?
A woman.—'T is a woman!

[*Enter* VERONIKA, *on the road from Hamelin. She is very pale and worn, and drags herself along, clutching in her hand a herd-bell. She looks about her, holds up the bell and shakes it once softly, covering it with her fingers again; then she sits wearily down at the foot of the ruined*

shrine, and covers her face, with a sharp breath.

VERONIKA

. . . Ah, — ah, — ah!

[*The* PIPER *watches with breathless wonder and fascination. It seems to horrify him.*

PIPER

[*under breath*]

That woman!

[VERONIKA *lifts her head suddenly and sees the motion of the bushes.*

VERONIKA

He is coming! — He is here!

[*She darts towards the well.* — *The* PIPER *springs up.*

Oh, God of Mercy! . . . It is only you!
Where is he? — Where? — Where are you hiding him?

PIPER

[*confusedly*]

Woman . . . what do you, wandering, with that bell?
That herd-bell?

VERONIKA

Oh! are you man or cloud? . . . Where is my
Jan?
Jan, — Jan, — the little lame one! He is mine.
He lives, I know he lives. I know — yes, yes,
You 've hidden him. I will be patient. — Yes.

PIPER

Surely he lives!

VERONIKA

— *Lives!* will you swear it? Ah, —
I will believe! But he . . . is not so strong
As all the others.

PIPER

[*apart*]

Aië, how horrible!

[*To her*]

Sit you down here. You cannot go away
While you are yet so pale. Why are you thus?

[*She looks at him distractedly.*]

VERONIKA

You, who have torn the hearts out of our bodies

And left the city like a place of graves, —
Why am I spent? — Ah, ah! — But he 's alive!
Yes, yes, he 's living.

PIPER

Oh, how horrible!
Why should he not be living? — What am I?

VERONIKA

I do not know.

PIPER

Do you take me for the Devil?

VERONIKA

I do not know.

PIPER

Yet you were not afraid?

VERONIKA

What is there now to fear?

PIPER

[*watching her*]

Where are the townsfolk?

VERONIKA

They are all gone to Rudersheim . . .

PIPER

[*still watchful*]

How so?

VERONIKA

Where, for a penance, Barbara, Jacob's daughter,
Will take the veil. His one, for all of ours!
It will be over now.

PIPER

Have none returned?

VERONIKA

I know not; I am searching, since the dawn.

PIPER

To-day?

VERONIKA

And every day.

PIPER

That herd-bell, there —
Why do you bring it?

VERONIKA

[*sobbing*]

Oh, he loves them so.
I knew, if he but heard it, he would follow —

PIPER

No more. I know!

VERONIKA

An if he could!

PIPER

[*like a wounded animal*]

You hurt me
Somewhere, — you hurt me!

VERONIKA

You! — A man of air?

PIPER

What, am I that?

VERONIKA

What are you? — Give them back!
Give them to me, I say. You have them hidden.
Are they all living?

PIPER

[*struggling with pity*]

Yes, yes.

VERONIKA

Give them back!

PIPER

No.

VERONIKA

But they live, they live?

PIPER

— Wilt thou believe me?

VERONIKA

And are they safe?

PIPER

Yes.

VERONIKA

And you hide them?

PIPER

Yes.

VERONIKA

And are they . . . warm?

PIPER

—Yes.

VERONIKA

Are they happy?—Oh,
That cannot be!—But do they laugh, sometimes?

PIPER

Yes.

VERONIKA

—Then you'll give them back again!

PIPER

No, never.

VERONIKA

[*Half to herself, distraught between suspense and hope*]

I must be patient.

PIPER

Woman, they all are mine.
I hold them in my hands; they bide with me.
What 's breath and blood,—what are the hearts of children,
To Hamelin,—while it heaps its money-bags?

VERONIKA

You cared not for the money.

PIPER

No?—You seem
A foreign woman,—come from very far,
That you should know.

VERONIKA

I know. I was not born
There. But you wrong them. There were yet a few

Who would have dealt with you more honestly
Than this Jacobus, or—

PIPER

Or Kurt the Syndic!
Believe it not. Those two be tongue and brain
For the whole town! I know them. And that town
Stands as the will of other towns, a score,
That make us wandering poor the things we are!
It stands for all, unto the end of time,
That turns this bright world black and the Sun cold,
With hate, and hoarding; — all-triumphant Greed
That spreads above the roots of all despair,
And misery, and rotting of the soul!
Now shall they learn — if money-bags can learn —
What turns the bright world black, and the Sun cold;
And what 's that creature that they call a child! —
And what this winged thing men name a heart
Beating queer rhythms that they long to kill. —
What is this hunger and this thirst to sing,
To laugh, to fight, — to hope, to be *believed?*

And what is truth? And who did make the stars?
. . . . . .
I have to pay for fifty thousand hates,
Greeds, cruelties; such barbarous tortured days
A tiger would disdain; — for all my kind!
Not my one mother, not my own of kin, —
All, all, who wear the motley in the heart
Or on the body: — for all cagèd glories
And trodden wings, and sorrows laughed to scorn.
I, — I! — At last.

VERONIKA

Ah, me! How can I say:
Yet make them happier than they let you be?

PIPER

Woman, you could! — They know not how to be
Happy! They turn to darkness and to woe
All that is made for joy. They deal with men
As, far across the mountains, in the south,
Men trap a singing thrush, put out his eyes, —
And cage him up and bid him then to sing —
Sing before God that made him, — yes, to sing!
. . . . . .
I *save* the children. — Yes, I save them, so,

Save them forever, who shall save the world!—
Yes, even Hamelin.—
But for only *you*,
What do they know of Children?—Pfui, *their own!*
Who knows a treasure, when it is his own?
Do they not whine: '*Five mouths around the table;*
And a poor harvest. And now comes one more!
God chastens us!'—Pfui!—

VERONIKA
[*apart, dully*]
. . . But I must be patient.

PIPER
You know, you know, that not one dared, save you,—
Dared all alone, to search this devil's haunt.

VERONIKA
They would have died—

PIPER
But never risked their *souls!*
That knew I also.

VERONIKA

Ah!

PIPER

'Young faces,' sooth,
The old ones prate of! — Bah, what is 't they want?
'Some one to work for me, when I am old;
Some one to follow me unto my grave;
Some one — for me!' Yes, yes. There is not one
Old huddler-by-the-fire would shift his seat
To a cold corner, if it might bring back
All of the Children in one shower of light!

VERONIKA

The old, ah, yes! But not —

PIPER

The younger men?
Aha! Their pride to keep the name alive;
The name, the name, the little Hamelin name,
Tied to the trade; — carved plain upon his gravestone!

Wonderful! If your name must chain you, live,
To your gaol of a house, your trade you love
not, — why,
Best go without a name, like me! — How now?
Woman, — you suffer?

VERONIKA

Ah, yet could I laugh,
Piper, yet could I laugh, for one true word, —
But not of all men.

PIPER

Then of whom?

VERONIKA

Of Kurt.

PIPER

Bah, Kurt the Councillor! a man to curse.

VERONIKA

He is my husband.

PIPER

[*shortly*]

Thine? I knew it not.

Thine? But it cannot be. He could not father
That little Jan,—that little shipwrecked Star.

VERONIKA

Oh, then you love him? You will give him back?

PIPER

The son of Kurt?

VERONIKA

No, not *his* son! No, no.
He is all mine, all mine. Kurt's sons are straight,
And ruddy, like Kurt's wife of Hamelin there,
Who died before.

PIPER

And you were wed . . .

VERONIKA

So young,
It is all like some dream before the sunrise,
That left me but that little shipwrecked Star.

PIPER

Why did you marry Kurt the Councillor?

VERONIKA

[*humbly*]

He wanted me. Once I was beautiful.

PIPER

[*wonderingly*]

What, more than now?

VERONIKA

Mock if you will.

PIPER

I mock you!
O Woman, . . . you are very beautiful.

VERONIKA

I meant, with my poor self, to buy him house
And warmth, and softness for his little feet.
Oh, then I knew not,—when we sell our hearts,
We buy us nothing.

PIPER

Now you know.

VERONIKA,

I know.
His dearest home it was, to keep my heart
Alone and beautiful, and clear and still;
And to keep all the gladness in my heart,
That bubbled from nowhere! — for him to drink; —
And to be houseless of all other things,
Even as the Lonely Man.

[*The* PIPER *starts*]

Where is the child?

PIPER

No; that I will not tell. Only thus much:
I love thy child. Trust me, — I love them, all.
They are the brightest miracle I know.
Wherever I go, I search the eyes of men
To find such clearness; — and it is not there.
Lies, greed and cruelty, and dreadful dark!
And all that makes Him sad these thousand years,
And keeps His forehead bleeding. — Ah, you know!

VERONIKA

Whom do you think on?

PIPER

Why, the Lonely Man.—
But now I have the children safe with me;
And men shall never teach them what men know;—
Those radiant things that have no wish at all
Save for what is all-beautiful!—the Rainbow,
The running Water, and the Moon, the Moon!
The only things worth having!

VERONIKA

—Oh, you will not
Give him to me?

PIPER

How give you yours again,
And not the others? What a life for him!
[*She hides her face*]
And Kurt the Syndic, left without his sons?
Bah, do not dream of it! What would Kurt do?—
And hearken here! Should any hunt me down,
Take care. Who then could bring the children back?

VERONIKA

Jan! Jan!

PIPER

He loves me. He is happy.

VERONIKA

[*passionately*]

No!

Without me? — No.

PIPER

He has not even once

Called you.

VERONIKA

[*staggering*]

Ah, ah! how cruel! 'T is the spell,

The spell.

PIPER

[*touching his heart*]

— You hurt me, here. What makes it,

Woman? —

Would you not have him happy?

VERONIKA

O my God!

PIPER

[*offering her water*]

Drink here. Take heart. O Woman, they must
stay!
'T is better so. No, no, I mock thee not.
Thou foldest all about me like the Dark
That holds the stars. I would I were thy child.

VERONIKA

But I will find him. I will find him —

PIPER

No,
It must not be! Their life is bound with mine.
If I be harmed, they perish. Keep that word.
Go, go!

VERONIKA

[*passionately*]

My longing will bring back my Own.

PIPER

Ah, long not so.

VERONIKA

Yes, it will bring him back!
He breathes. And I will wish him home to me,
Till my heart break!

PIPER

Hearts never break in Hamelin.
Go, then; and teach those other ones to long;
Wake up those dead!

VERONIKA

Peace. I shall draw him home.

PIPER

Not till he cries for thee.

VERONIKA

Oh, that will be
Soon, — soon.

PIPER

[*gently*]

Remember, — if one word of thine
Set on the hounds to track me down and slay me,

They will be lost forever; they would die,—
They, who are in my keeping.

VERONIKA

Yea, I hear.
But he will come . . . oh, he will come to me,
Soon,—soon.

[*She goes, haltingly, and disappears along the road to Hamelin.—The* PIPER, *alone, stands spell-bound, breathing hard, and looking after her. Then he turns his head and comes down, doggedly. Again he pauses. With a sudden sharp effort he turns, and crosses with passionate appeal to the shrine, his arm uplifted towards the carven Christ as if he warded off some accusation. His speech comes in a torrent.*

PIPER

I will not, no, I will not, Lonely Man!
I have them in my hand. I have them all—
All—all! And I have lived unto this day.
You understand . . .

[*He waits as if for some reply*]

You know what men they are.
And what have they to do with such as these?

Think of those old as death, in body and heart,
Hugging their wretched hoardings, in cold fear
Of moth and rust! — While these miraculous ones,
Like golden creatures made of sunset-cloud,
Go out forever, — every day, fade by
With music and wild stars! — Ah, but You know.
The hermit told me once, You loved them, too.
But I know more than he, how You must love them:
Their laughter, and their bubbling, skylark words
To cool Your heart. Oh, listen, Lonely Man! —
. . . . . .
Oh, let me keep them! I will bring them to You,
Still nights, and breathless mornings; they shall touch
Your hands and feet with all their swarming hands,
Like showering petals warm on furrowed ground, —
All sweetness! They will make Thee whole again,
With love. Thou wilt look up and smile on us!
. . . . . .

Why not? I know — the half — You will be saying.
You will be thinking of Your Mother. — Ah,
But she was different. She was not as they.
She was more like . . . this one, the wife of Kurt!
Of Kurt! No, no; ask me not this, not this!
Here is some dawn of day for Hamelin, — now!
'T is hearts of men You want. Not mumbled prayers;
Not greed and carven tombs, not misers' candles;
No offerings, more, from men that feed on men;
Eternal psalms and endless cruelties! . . .
Even from now, there may be hearts in Hamelin,
Once stabbed awake!

[*He pleads, defends, excuses passionately; before his will gives way, as the arrow flies from the bow-string.*]

— I will not give them back!

And Jan, — for Jan, that little one, that dearest
To Thee and me, hark, — he is wonderful.
Ask it not of me. Thou dost know I cannot!
. . . . . .

Look, Lonely Man! You shall have all of us
To wander the world over, where You stand
At all the crossways, and on lonely hills,—
Outside the churches, where the lost ones go!—
And the wayfaring men, and thieves and wolves
And lonely creatures, and the ones that sing!
We will show all men what we hear and see;
And we will make Thee lift Thy head, and smile.

. . . . . .

No, no, I cannot give them all! No, no.—
Why wilt Thou ask it?—Let me keep but one.
No, no, I will not. . . . . .
. . . . . .
. . . . *Have Thy way.—I will!*

Curtain

Act IV

Act IV

Scene: *Hamelin market-place.*

It is early morning; so dark that only a bleak twilight glimmers in the square; the little streets are dim. Everywhere gloom and stillness. In the house of Kurt, *beside the Minster, there is one window-light behind a curtain in the second story. At the casements, down right and left, sit* Old Claus *and* Old Ursula, *wan and motionless as the dead.*

The church-bell, which likewise seems to have aged, croaks softly, twice. Peter *the Sacristan stands by the bell-rope.*

Old Ursula

NO, no. They 'll never come. I told ye so.
They all are gone. There will be nothing young
To follow us to the grave.

OLD CLAUS

No, no, — not one!

[*The Minster-door opens, and out come certain of the townsfolk from early mass. They look unnaturally old and colorless. Their steps lag drearily.* — HANS *the Butcher and his wife;* AXEL *the Smith with his wife, and* PETER *the Cobbler, meet, on their way to the little street, left, and greet one another with painstaking, stricken kindness. They speak in broken voices.*

HANS *the Butcher*

Well, well —

AXEL *the Smith*

God knows!

[*The bell sounds*]

HANS *the Butcher*

Neighbor, how fare your knees?

[AXEL *smooths his right leg and gives a jerk of pain. They all move stiffly.*

AXEL *the Smith*

I'm a changed man.

HANS *the Butcher*

Peter the Sacristan,
Give by the bell! It tolls like — Oh, well, well!

AXEL *the Smith*

It does no good, it does no good at all.

PETER *the Cobbler*

Rather, I do believe it mads the demons;
And I have given much thought —

AXEL *the Smith*

Over thy shoes!

PETER *the Cobbler*
[*modestly*]

To demons.

AXEL'S WIFE

Let him chirp philosophy!
He had no children.

PETER *the Cobbler*
[*wagging his head solemnly*]

I 'm an altered man.
Now were we not proceeding soberly,
Singing a godly hymn, and all in tune,
But yesterday, when we passed by —

HANS' WIFE

Don't say it!
Don't name the curseful place.

HANS *the Butcher*

— And my poor head,
It goes round yet; — around, around, around,
As I were new ashore from the high seas;
Still dancing — dancing —

AXEL *the Smith*

With 'Yes — yes! — Yes — yes!'

HANS *the Butcher*

Even as ye heard, the farmer's yokel found me
Clasping a tree, and praying to stand still!

AXEL *the Smith*

Ay, ay,—but that is nought.

PETER *the Cobbler*

All nought beside.

HANS' WIFE

Better we had the rats and mice again,
Though they did eat us homeless,—if we might
All starve together!—Oh, my Hans, my Hans!

PETER *the Cobbler*

Hope not, good souls. Rest sure, they will not come.

AXEL'S WIFE

Who will say that?

PETER *the Cobbler*
[*discreetly*]

Not I; but the Inscription.
[*He points to the Rathaus wall.*]

AXEL *the Smith*

Of our own making?

PETER *the Cobbler*

On the Rathaus wall!
At our own bidding it was made and graved:—
How,—on that day and down this very street,
He led them,—he, the Wonderfully-clothed,
The Strange Man, with his piping;
[*They cross themselves*]
And they went,—
And never came again.

HANS' WIFE

But they may come!

PETER *the Cobbler*
[*pityingly*]

Marble is final, woman;—nay, poor soul!
When once a man be buried, and over him
The stone doth say *Hic Jacet*, or Here Lies,
When did that man get up?—There is the stone.
They come no more, for piping or for prayer;
Until the trump of the Lord Gabriel.

And if they came, 't is not in Hamelin men
To alter any stone, so graven. — Marble
Is final. Marble has the last word, ever.
[*Groans from the burghers.*]

HANS *the Butcher*

O little Ilse! — Oh! and Lump — poor Lump!
More than a dog could bear! — More than a dog —
[*They all break down. The Shoemaker consoles them.*

PETER *the Cobbler*

Bear up, sweet neighbors. — We are all but dust.
No mice, no children. — Hem! And now Jacobus, —
His child, not even safe with Holy Church,
But lost and God knows where!

AXEL'S WIFE

Bewitched, — bewitched!
[*Hans and his wife, arm in arm, turn left, towards their house, peering ahead.*

HANS' WIFE

Kind saints! Me out and gone to early mass,
And all this mortal church-time, there 's a candle,
A candle burning in the casement there;—
Thou wasteful man!

HANS *the Butcher*
[*huskily*]

Come, come! Do not be chiding.
Suppose they came and could not see their way.
Suppose—O wife!—I thought they 'd love the light!
I thought—

PETER *the Cobbler*

Ay, now! And there 's another light
In Kurt the Syndic's house.

[*They turn and look up. Other burghers join the group. All walk lamely and look the picture of wretchedness.*

AXEL'S WIFE

His wife, poor thing,

The priest is with her. Ay, for once, they say,
Kurt's bark is broken.

OLD URSULA

There will be nothing young
To follow us to the grave.

AXEL'S WIFE

They tell, she seems
Sore stricken since the day that she was lost,
Lost, searching on the mountain. Since that time,
She will be saying nought. She stares and smiles.

HANS' WIFE

And reaches out her arms,—poor soul!

ALL

Poor soul!

[*Murmur in the distance. They do not heed it.*

AXEL *the Smith*
[*To the Butcher*]

That was no foolish thought of thine, yon candle.

I do remember now as I look back,
They always loved the lights. My Rudi there
Would aye be meddling with my tinder-box.
And once I — Oh! —

[*Choking*]

AXEL'S WIFE

[*soothingly*]

Now, now! thou didst not hurt him!
'T was I! Oh, once — I shut him in the dark!

AXEL *the Smith*

Come home . . . and light the candles.

PETER *the Cobbler*

In the day-time!

AXEL'S WIFE

Oh, it is dark enough!

AXEL *the Smith*

Lord knows, who made
Both night and day, one of 'em needs to shine!
But nothing does! — Nothing is daylight now.
Come, wife, we 'll light the candles.

[*Exit with his wife.*

PETER *the Cobbler*

He 's a changed man.

PETER *the Sacristan*

God help us, what 's to do?

[*Tumult approaching. Shouts of 'Jacobus' and 'Barbara.'*

Hark!

HANS' WIFE

Neighbors!

HANS *the Butcher*

Hark! Hark!

[AXEL *and his wife reënter hastily;* AXEL *rushes toward the noise.*

AXEL'S WIFE

Oh, I hear something! Can it be —

PETER *the Cobbler*

They 're shouting.

HANS *the Butcher*

My lambs, — my lambs!
[AXEL *reënters, crestfallen*]

AXEL *the Smith*

'T is naught — but Barbara!
His — his!
[*Shaking his fist at the house of Jacobus.*]

PETER *the Cobbler*
[*calling*]

Jacobus!
[*The others are stricken with disappointment.*

HANS *the Butcher*

Wife, — 't is none of ours.

AXEL *the Smith*

Let him snore on! — The only man would rather
Sleep late than meet his only child again!

PETER *the Cobbler*
[*deprecatingly*]

No man may parley with the gifts of Fortune!
[*Knocking on the door*]
Jacobus!

[*Enter, at the rear, with a straggling crowd,* BARBARA *and* MICHAEL, *both radiant and resolute. She wears the long green cloak over her bridal array.*

JACOBUS *appears in his doorway, night-capped and fur-gowned, shrinking from the hostile crowd. The people murmur.*

CROWD

Barbara! — She that was bewitched!
And who 's the man? Is it the Piper? No!
No, no — some stranger. Barbara! Barbara 's home; —
He never gave her up! — Who is the man?

JACOBUS

My daughter! 'T is my daughter, — found — restored!
Oh, heaven is with us!

ALL

[*sullenly*]

Ah!

JACOBUS

Child, where have you been?

ALL

Ay, where, Jacobus?

[*He is dismayed.*]

JACOBUS

Who is this man? — Come hither.

BARBARA

[*without approaching him, lifting her face clearly*]

Good-morning to you, father! We are wed.
Michael, — shall I go hither?

[*The townsfolk are amazed.*]

JACOBUS

She is mad!
She is quite mad, — my treasure.

PETER *the Cobbler*

Let her speak.
Maids sometimes marry, even in Hamelin.

ALL

Ay, tell us!
Who is he? Barbara?
Art thou mad? — How came ye hither?

JACOBUS

Who is he?

BARBARA

Michael.

PETER *the Cobbler*

'T is the Sword-Eater!
A friend o' the Piper's! — Hearken —

ALL

She's bewitched!

HANS' WIFE

This is the girl was vowed to Holy Church,
For us and for our children that are lost!

BARBARA

Ay, and did any have a mind to me,
When I was lost? Left dancing, and distraught?

ALL

We could not. We were spell-bound. Nay,
we could not.

JACOBUS

[*sagely, after the others*]

We could not.

BARBARA

So! — But there was one who could.
There was one man. And this is he.
[*Turning to Michael*]
And I,
I am no more your Barbara, — I am his.
And I will go with him, over the world.
I come to say farewell.

JACOBUS

He hath bewitched her!

MICHAEL

Why did we ever come? Poor darling one,
Thy too-much duty hath us in a trap!

AXEL *the Smith*

No, no! — Fair play!

OTHERS

Don't let them go! We have them.

PETER *the Cobbler*

Hold what ye have. Be 't children, rats or mice!

[*Hubbub without, and shouts. Some of the burghers hasten out after this fresh excitement.* JACOBUS *is cowed.* BARBARA *and* MICHAEL *are startled. The shouts turn savage. The uproar grows. Shouts of* '*Ay, there he is! We have him! We have him! Help — help! Hold fast! Ah! Piper! Piper! Piper!*'

How now? What all! —

[*The crowd parts to admit the* PIPER, *haled hither with shouts and pelting, by* MARTIN *the Watch and other men, all breathless. His eyes burn.*

MICHAEL

[*apart*]

Save us! — They have him.

MARTIN

[*gaspingly*]

Help!
Mark ye — I caught him! — Help, — and hold him fast!

PIPER

I came here, — frog!

MARTIN

Ay, he were coming on;
And after him a squirrel, hopping close!

SECOND MAN

As no man ever saw a squirrel hop —
Near any man from Hamelin! And I looked —

MARTIN

And it was he; and all we rush upon him —
And take him!

PIPER

Loose thy claws, I tell thee! —

ALL

'Ware!
Mercy!
Let him go!

VOICE FROM CROWD

I have the squirrel!

PIPER

[*savagely*]

Let the squirrel go!
Or you shall rue it. — Loose him! He 's not mine.

[*He sees* BARBARA *and* MICHAEL *for the first time and recoils with amazement.* BARBARA *steps towards him.*

BARBARA

Oh, let him go, — let be. His heart is clear,
As water from the well!

[*The* PIPER *gazes at her, open-mouthed.*]

ALL

{ She talks in her sleep!
The maid's bewitched!
Now, will ye hear?

AXEL'S WIFE

He piped and made thee dance!

PETER *the Cobbler*

'T was he bewitched **us**!

BARBARA

[*serenely*]

Whatever was, — it was for love of me.

PIPER

[*thunderstruck*]

So!

BARBARA

He piped; — and all ye danced and fled away!
He piped; — and brought me back my wandering wits,
And gave me safe unto my Love again, —
My Love I had forgotten. . . .

PIPER

So!

MICHAEL
[*with conviction*]

Truly said.

BARBARA
[*proudly*]

Michael.

JACOBUS

Who is he, pray?

BARBARA

My own true love.

PETER *the Cobbler*

Now, is that all his name?

BARBARA

It is enough.

JACOBUS

— She 's mad. Shall these things be?

ALL

The Children! The Children!
Where are the Children?
Piper! Piper! Piper!

PIPER

[*sternly*]

Quiet you. And hear me.
I came to bring good tidings. In good faith,
Of mine own will, I came. — And like a thief
You haled me hither. —

[*They hang upon his words*]

. . . Your children — live.

ALL

Thank God! I knew, I knew!
We could not think them lost.
Bewitched! Oh, but they live! —
Piper! — O Piper!

PETER *the Cobbler*

They're spell-bound, — mark me!

PIPER

Ay, they are, — spell-bound:
Fast bound by all the hardness of your hearts;
Caged, — in the iron of your money-lust —

ALL

{No, no, not all! Not I! Not mine, not mine!
{No, no, — it is not true.

PIPER

Your blasphemies, — your cunning and your Fear.

ALL

{No, no! — What can we do?
{News, Piper, news!
{Where are your tidings, Piper?

PIPER

Now hear me. You did make Jacobus swear
To give his child. — What recks it, how he lose her? —
Either to Holy Church — *against her will!* —
Or to this man, — so that he give her up!

He swore to you. And she hath pledged her faith.
She is fast wed. — Jacobus shall not have her.
He breaks all bargains; and for such as he,
You suffer. — Will you bear it?

ALL

No, no, no!

PIPER

Then she who was "Proud Barbara" doth wed
Michael-the-Sword-Eater. — The pledge shall stand.
Shall it?

ALL

{ It stands.
{ Ay, ay!

PIPER

Your word!

ALL

{ We swear. We answer for him.
{ So much for Jacobus!

AXEL *the Smith*

An' if yon fellow like an honest trade,
I'll take him! — I'll make swords!
[*Cheers. Michael is happy.*]

ALL

Quick, quick! — Our children. — Piper! — Tell us all!

PIPER

'T is well begun. — Now have I come to say:
There is one child I may bring back to you, —
The first.

ALL
[*in an uproar*]

Mine — mine! Let it be mine!
Ours! — All of them! Now!
Mine — mine — mine! — mine!

PIPER
[*unmoved*]

— Oh, Hamelin to the end!

Which of you longed the most, and dared the most?
Which of you —
[*He searches the crowd anxiously with his eyes.*]

ALL

I! I! I!
We searched the hills!
We prayed four days!
We fasted twenty hours —
Mine! Mine!
Mine — mine — mine — mine!

PIPER

Not yet. — They all do live
Under a spell, — deep in a hollow hill.
They sleep, and wake; and lead a charmèd life.
But first of all, — one child shall come again.
[*He scans the crowd still*]
Where is the wife — of Kurt, the Councillor?

ALL

[*savagely*]

No, mine, mine, mine!

MARTIN'S WIFE

What, that lame boy of hers?

PIPER

Where is the wife of Kurt?

PETER *the Cobbler* AND OTHERS

— Veronika?
The foreign woman? She is lying ill:
Sore-stricken yonder —
[*Pointing to the house.*]

PIPER

[*gladly*]

Bid her come, look out!
[*The crowd moves confusedly towards* KURT'S *house. The* PIPER *too approaches, calling*]
Ho, — ho, within there!
[ANSELM, *the priest, appears in the doorway with uplifted hand, commanding silence. He is pale and stern. At sight of his face the* PIPER *falters.*

ANSELM

Silence here! — Good people,
What means this?

PIPER

I have tidings for — the wife
Of Kurt — the Councillor.

ANSELM

You are too late.

PIPER

Bid her — look out!

ANSELM
[*solemnly*]

Her soul is passing, now.

[*The* PIPER *falls back stricken and speechless. — The crowd, seeing him humanly overwhelmed, grows brave.*

MARTIN'S WIFE

'T is he has done it!

HANS *the Butcher*

— Nay, it is God's will.
Poor soul!

PETER *the Sacristan*
[*fearfully*]

Don't anger him! 'T was Kurt the Syndic
With his bad bargain.

AXEL *the Smith*

Do not cross the Piper!

MARTIN

Nay, but he 's spent. He 's nought to fear. —
Look there.
Mark how he breathes! Upon him! Help,
help, ho! —
Thou piping knave!

OTHERS

Tie — chain him! — Kill him! — Kill him!
[*They surround him. He thrusts them off.*]

PETER *the Cobbler and* OTHERS

Bind him, but do not kill him! — Oh, be-
ware!
What is he saying? — Peace.

PIPER

[*brokenly*]

The wife of Kurt!
Off! what can you do? — Oh! I came, I came
Here, full of peace, and with a heart of love; —
To give — but now that one live Soul of all
Is gone! — No, no!
— *I say she shall not die!*
She shall not!

ANSELM

Hush! — She is in the hands of God.
She is at peace.

PIPER

No, never! Let me by!
[ANSELM *bars the threshold and steps out.*]

ANSELM

Thou froward fool! — Wouldst rend with tears
again
That shriven breath? And drag her back to
sorrow?
It is the will of God.

PIPER

— And I say No!

ANSELM

Who dare dispute —

PIPER

I dare!

ANSELM

With death? — With God?

PIPER

I know His will, for once! She shall not die.
She must come back, and live! — *Veronika!*

[*He calls up to the lighted window. The people stand aghast:* ANSELM *bars the threshold.*

I come, I come! I bring your Own to you!
Listen, Veronika!

[*He feels for his pipe. It is gone. — His face shows dismay, for a moment*]

Where? — Where?

PEOPLE

He's lost the pipe. — He's hiding it! —
He cannot pipe them back! 'tis gone — 'tis gone. —
No, 'tis to save his life. — It is for time.

PIPER

[*to himself*]

— 'T is but a voice. What matter? —

CROWD

Seize him —
Bind him!

PIPER

[*to them*]

Hush!

[*Passionately he stretches his arms towards the window.*

ANSELM

Peace, for this parting Soul!

PIPER

[*with fixed eyes*]

It shall not go.

[*To the Window*]

Veronika! — Ah, listen! — wife of Kurt.
He comes . . . he comes! Open thine eyes a moment!
Blow the faint fire within thy heart. He comes!
Thy longing brings him; — ay, *and mine,* — *and mine!*
Heed not these grave-makers, Veronika.
Live, live, and laugh once more! — *Oh! do you hear?*
Look, how you have to waken all these dead,
That walk about you! — Open their dim eyes;
Sing to them with your heart, Veronika,
As I am piping, far away, outside!
Waken them, — change them! Show them how to long,
To reach their arms as you do, for the stars,
And fold them in. Stay but one moment; — stay,
And thine own Child shall draw thee back again
Down here, to mother him, — mother us all!
Oh, do you listen? — Do not try to answer. —
I hear! — I hear. . . .

[*A faint sound of piping comes from the distance.* — *The* PIPER *is first watchful, then radiant.* — *The burghers are awe-struck, as it sounds nearer.*

BARBARA

Listen! —

MICHAEL

His very tune.

[*The* PIPER *faces front with fixed, triumphant eyes above the crowd.*

MARTIN'S WIFE

O Lord, have mercy! —
The Pipe is coming to him, through the air!

ALL

'T is coming to the Piper; — we are lost. —
The Pipe is coming, coming through the air!

[*The* PIPER, *with a sudden gesture, commands silence. He bounds away* (*centre*), *and disappears. The people, spell-bound with terror, murmur and pray.*

ANSELM

Retro me, Sathanas!

[KURT *the Syndic appears on the threshold behind* ANSELM, *whose arm he touches, whispering.— Their faces are wonder-struck with hope and awe.*

HANS *the Butcher*
[*to the others, pointing*]

'T is Kurt the Syndic.

AXEL *the Smith*

Then she lives!—

HANS' WIFE

Look there!

OTHERS

Look, look! The casement! . . .

[*The casement of the lighted window opens wide and slowly.— Reënter the* PIPER *with* JAN *in his arms. The little boy holds the Pipe, and smiles about with tranquil happiness. The* PIPER, *radiant with joy, lifts him high, looking toward* VERONIKA'S

window. — The awe-struck people point to the open casement.

VERONIKA'S *two white hands reach out; then she herself appears, pale, shining with ecstasy.*

JAN

'T is Mother!

[*The* PIPER *lifts him still before the window, gazing up. Then he springs upon the bench (outside the lower window) and gives* JAN *into the arms of* VERONIKA. — KURT *and* ANSELM *bow their heads. A hush. — Then* JAN *looks down from the window-seat.*

PIPER

[*to him, smiling wisely*]

And all the others?

JAN

They were all asleep.

PIPER

I 'll waken them!

[*He takes his pipe. — An uproar of joy among the burghers.*]

AXEL *the Smith*, HANS *the Butcher*, ALL

Bring lights, — bring lights!
Oh, Piper — Oh, my lambs!
The children! — The children!

[*Some rush out madly; others go into their houses for lights; some are left on their knees, weeping for joy.*

The PIPER *sounds a few notes; then lifts his hand and listens, smiling. — Uproar in the distance. — A great barking of dogs; — shouts and cheers; then the high, sweet voices of the Children.*

The piping is drowned in cries of joy. The sun comes out, still rosy, in a flood of light. The crowd rushes in. Fat burghers hug each other, and laugh and cry. They are all younger. Their faces bloom, as by a miracle.

The Children pour in. Some are carried, some run hand-in-hand. Everywhere women embrace their own. — KURT *has his sons. —* CHEAT-THE-DEVIL *comes, with a daisy-chain around his neck, all smiles.*

An uproar of light and faces.

HANS *the Butcher*

The treasure for the Piper!

ALL

Ay, ay, Piper!

HANS *the Butcher*

The thousand guilders!

PIPER

Give them Michael there,
For all us three. I hate to carry things; —
Saving out one!

[*He waves his hand to* JAN *in the window.* — VERONIKA *appears behind him, shining with new life.* JAN *leans out and points to the ground.*

Hêjà! What now? —

[*Picking up one of* JAN'S *winged shoes.*]

HANS' WIFE

Look! Look! —
And wings upon it! Mercy, what a shoe. —
Don't give it back. — The child will fly away!

PIPER

No, no!

[*Looking up at the window soothingly.*]

He only wanted one to show —

JAN

To Mother! — See.

[*Showing her his other foot, joyously*]

PIPER

[*to him*]

And this, — wilt leave it here?

Here — with —

JAN

The Lonely Man! Oh, make Him smile!

[*The* PIPER *crosses to the Shrine, with the little shoe, and hangs it up there; then he turns towards the window, waving his hand.*

CHILDREN

Where are you going? . . .

[*They run and cling.*]

PIPER

Ah, the high-road now!

CHILDREN

Oh! why?

PIPER

I have to find somebody there.
Yes, now and every day, and everywhere
The wide world over. — So: good-night, good-morning,
Good-by! There 's so much piping left to do, —
I must be off, and pipe.

CHILDREN

Oh! why?

PIPER

I promised,
Look you! . . .

CHILDREN

Who is it?

PIPER

Why,— the Lonely Man.

[*He waves them farewell, and goes. The Children dance and laugh and sparkle. Through the hundred sounds of joy, there comes a far-off piping.*

THE END

NEWBEGIN'S
315-317 SUTTER ST